

## Interview with Caroline Clendening Laise

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project  
Women Ambassadors Series

AMBASSADOR CAROLINE CLENDENING LAISE (BUNKER)

Interviewed by: Ann Miller Morin

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*Q: This is a record of an interview with Caroline Clendening Laise (Bunker) for the Women in Federal Government Oral History Project, sponsored by the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. The interviewer is Ann Miller Morin. This interview is taking place in Ambassador Laise's home in Washington, D.C. Today is May 8, 1985.*

I wonder if you would tell us a little about your family, Ambassador Laise. You were born in Winchester, Virginia, I believe.

LAISE: Yes, that is correct. My father's family was from Virginia and West Virginia, my mother's family from New England. So a great deal of our childhood was spent with winters in Virginia and West Virginia, and the summers in upstate New York and New England.

*Q: Were your parents of English origin?*

LAISE: My father's family, Laise, is Pennsylvania Dutch. His mother and maternal forebears were Scotch-Irish, Clendening. My name is actually Caroline Clendening Laise. I was named for both of my grandmothers. My grandmother on my mother's side, whose

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name was Frances Caroline Saxe, like Saxe Coburg, and my father's mother whose maiden name was Clendening. So that on my father's side, it was Pennsylvania Dutch and German, as well as Scotch-Irish. On my mother's side, it was also German, as the name Saxe would imply, and English.

*Q: You had one brother, I think you mentioned.*

LAISE: The family consisted of a sister and a brother. My brother is still living. My sister was killed by an automobile, which struck her as she was returning home from school, at the age of about seven. So that in most of my life, the family consisted of my mother, father, brother and myself.

My grandparents on my mother's side originally came from Boston. My grandfather was a Methodist minister, educated at Wesleyan College in Connecticut and Boston University. Because of that fact, of course, it meant he, in his ministry, moved from place to place. So that at the time my mother and father were married, my grandfather was a minister in Rutland, Vermont. So my parents were married in Vermont. And of course, now I've returned to Vermont as a part-time home, and used to holiday there. So that it's not altogether a strange place.

On my father's side, the Pennsylvania Dutch emigrated from Germany and then spread from Pennsylvania down through the Shenandoah Valley, and were mostly farmers and orchardists. So his family was a family of independent farmers in the Shenandoah Valley. He, himself, I think, was perhaps the first in the family to receive a college education. He went to Dickinson College.

My mother was not the first in the family to have a college education. She received her education at Goucher College in Baltimore. My father and mother were both teachers. My father was teaching in Connecticut and my mother also in Greenwich, Connecticut, as a matter of fact. And that is where they met. However, my father got ill after their marriage and the birth of my brother, and so he returned to the family home in, curiously

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enough, Bunker Hill, West Virginia, and went into business. We stayed in Bunker Hill, West Virginia, until I was of age to enter the eighth grade, at which point, his business brought him to Washington.

*Q: I see. Were you the youngest child or the . . .*

LAISE: No, I was the middle child. The youngest was my sister, who was killed at the age of seven.

*Q: I see. Then you went to school in the Washington schools, did you? That is, for your junior and senior high school?*

LAISE: Yes. In other words, my early upbringing was in a rural community, where the family were community leaders. My father and mother had associations and ties in both large towns on either side of our community, that is, Winchester, Virginia, and Martinsburg, West Virginia. A lot of their social activity was there. My father, nevertheless, brought in lectures and entertainment and cultural events into this small community from the outside world. I think one could fairly characterize it as an upbringing in a rural environment with the traditional American values, and a very happy childhood in the country, so to speak . . . country pursuits of picnics and swimming and sports and things of that sort. My mother, in the course of her career as a teacher, also was an accomplished musician. She played the piano and she also sang. So we had a good deal of music, and a lot of the family entertainment was music at home or singing.

*Q: Did you learn any musical instrument?*

LAISE: No. Of course, all of us, at one stage, had a go at the piano. But I'm afraid I'm the least musical member of the family. My brother does not play an instrument, but he has a good musical ear and sings very well.

*Q: What about church? Did you belong to any particular church?*

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LAISE: Well, yes, as you can imagine, being the daughter of a minister, as my mother was, we were very active in the Methodist Church. We used to spend summers with my grandparents, who had a summer home just outside of Saratoga Springs, New York. Because Saratoga happened to be one of his parishes, he apparently liked it well enough to retire there when he finished at his last church. His last church was at Albany, New York. So that most of my mother's friends, whom I knew, who were what we called "courtesy" aunts and uncles, were clustered in Albany, New York. We saw a good deal of them, because they also used to come to this resort. So that the summers were spent in a community, just south of Saratoga, called Round Lake, where there used to be a large auditorium for a great deal of summer activity of the churches from the larger cities, and also a great deal of music, because it was very often the site of workshops for musicians coming from New York. My mother continued her studies in organ and singing during the summer.

*Q: It must have been a very rich life you had.*

LAISE: It was very pleasant, like I say. As I recall those summers, since it was on a lake, a great part of the day, as far as I was concerned, was spent on the water or in the water. Of course, tennis courts. It was very remarkable for a small community such as that was, [in that] it had a very good library and librarians, so I did a great deal of reading.

*Q: You were an early reader and an avid reader?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Could you tell us a little about your schooling? Were you a good student?*

LAISE: Yes. (Pause) My father went through college, I think, in three years. He was a very good student and was very good at mathematics. That was the subject that he taught. My mother, I think, I'm not certain, but I think she taught English. So that the combination provided an encouragement to all of us in our studies. I don't have any recollection of any

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extreme pressures, nor do I have any recollection of fighting homework, or things like that. I know that my first-grade teacher was considered very good. I don't have a recollection of any . . . I'm sorry, my first-grade teacher and my seventh-grade teacher were very good. Those are the only recollections I have of any special leadership in the school at Bunker Hill.

When I came to Washington and went to grade school and eighth grade in Chevy Chase, which was where we lived, it seemed rather tough at first, but I had a very good teacher there. So that I did not have too much trouble making a transition from a rural school to a city school, and I guess, graduated from eighth grade satisfactorily at somewhere near the top of the class. Then when I went to high school, it was Western High School in Washington, which was the only high school serving the Northwest area at that point.

*Q: Oh, is that so? What about your brother, did you play much with him?*

LAISE: Oh yes, I'm afraid I was a bit of a tomboy, and enjoyed very much playing with his friends. In fact, that's most of my recollection . . . is playing. We had a very large yard, and played volleyball, croquet—and volleyball was almost always with his friends. He was quite small . . . but he's now over six feet. He shot up rather late, so he was picked on by the other boys. I was a very stout defender and ally of his.

*Q: Was he much older than you?*

LAISE: Four years.

*Q: I imagine that probably hero worship was involved in that too. What about your grandparents? You say you spent a lot of time every summer with them? What about your father's parents?*

LAISE: His father died from a heart attack before I was born, and his mother was not terribly well. So, while we saw a good deal of her, since we lived in the same community

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with his mother and his sister, she was—we always thought of her as something of a wet blanket, because we always had to keep quiet.

*Q: (Chuckles) Did you ever have any illnesses as a child?*

LAISE: I had pneumonia when I was in the first grade.

*Q: I see, but nothing that cast a real setback on your development.*

LAISE: No. No, my recollection of that was—of course, I blanked out all the serious times, and it was just very nice to be waited on and to have my classmates send letters and have all sorts of goodies coming to appease my appetite.

*Q: Do you think that the death of your sister made you perhaps even more cherished by your parents, and more protected than you would have been otherwise? Do you think it had any effect on your development, in other words?*

LAISE: I'm not aware of it. My brother—we were talking about it not long ago. He thinks that since she was the more outgoing and lively and I was the kind of middle one and more shy, he perceives that with her death, I sort of came out of my shell and was more outgoing, and it had that effect. But I certainly have no recollection of that at all.

*Q: Of course, another thing happened too: you ceased being a middle child, which is difficult, of course.*

LAISE: Yes, that's correct.

*Q: You played a lot of sports all through school, did you?*

LAISE: Yes, I did.

*Q: You mentioned tennis, which I believe, is still a lasting . . .*

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LAISE: Yes, I still play tennis.

*Q: Did you belong to things like Girl Scouts and 4H?*

LAISE: Not to 4H. I did belong to Girl Scouts. I joined that here in Washington, as a matter of fact. However, it never came up to my expectations. Having read lots of books about boys' activities and Boy Scouting and hearing about it from cousins and so on, somehow or other, Girl Scouting seemed very tame by comparison. The outstanding event I remember was having to go to the Easter egg roll at the White House when the Hoovers were in the White House, and sort of helping to oversee the children and make sure that everything went right.

*Q: What was your family's attitude toward educating girls? I should imagine that you were treated the same way your brother was, but did they just assume that you would go on to college as your mother had?*

LAISE: Yes. Well, as you can gather, it was an environment that valued education, and it was just assumed that I would go on.

*Q: And you were encouraged to read of course. Did you read the Hardy books, the ones that boys read, or did you stick to the Nancy Drews and that sort of thing? Or do you remember?*

LAISE: No, you know, Louisa May Alcott is the one that I remember at this point most, and Indians stories, I suppose. At this point, I really don't remember except—oh, the Bobbsey twins, isn't that one that used to have a series? Plus my brother had a whole lot of books that I—on outdoor life. I can't remember the names of them.

*Q: But you enjoyed them.*

LAISE: Yes.

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*Q: Was there ever any discussion in your home about whether or not you should go to a prep school, as opposed to a public school, or were your parents always backers of the public school?*

LAISE: Well, it wasn't a matter—I guess my father went to a preparatory school. He did not go to a public school, Shenandoah Valley Academy in Winchester, Virginia. My mother, I'm not quite certain, but I know she taught at one stage at Emma Willard, which was a private school. Then she taught in Greenwich, Connecticut, Rosemary Hall. My father taught at boys' schools. So I think they were aware of the value of both the private and the public school, but financial considerations would have prevented it, of course.

*Q: You went to American University, I believe, after high school.*

LAISE: Yes. The curious thing that I really never quite understood about the question of my education—but then, I think it grew out of the circumstances—was that there was no particular, certainly not compared to today, attention paid to where I was going to college, as I can recall. I know that my mother did not want me to go to Goucher for the simple reason that, by that time, it was in the middle of the red-light district in Baltimore. The reason for this, I think, was my mother was very ill, and I guess at the time that I would be normally thinking about college, my father knew that she was terminally ill. He told me well ahead of time. I think that his preoccupation was almost entirely with her, and also—it was during the Depression—with how to manage everything, given her illness. So that not a great deal was, in my consciousness at any rate, discussed that I remember about it.

I was at the top of my class at Western. And in those days, those happy days, when you were in the top ten percent of your class at Western High School, the classic standard was such that you got into the Ivy League without College Boards. Since I was the valedictorian of the class, I had scholarship opportunities, and was thinking, largely because of my summer associations and friendships among my mother's friends—one in particular, who was at Wellesley—I was really thinking about Wellesley. Although I got a scholarship and



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gift from the local Radcliffe Society, Wellesley appealed to me much more at that stage. But it was simply out of the question because of my mother's illness. For that reason, my father had prepared the way for my going to school so that I could stay at home, which meant American University.

*Q: Your mother died while you were still in high school? I see she died October 5, 1934.*

LAISE: Yes, well, I graduated in June of '34. I entered American University late, late registration, because I attended her until she died.

*Q: It must have been a very traumatic thing for a young girl, just at one of the worst times possible, I would think, to lose your mother.*

LAISE: Yes, it was difficult.

*Q: Were you particularly close to your mother?*

LAISE: Yes. Yet, you know, I regret very much that I feel as though I didn't know—in retrospect, I feel as though I didn't know my mother really as an adult all that well. She was very active in music circles here. Of course, I was not musical. I was totally involved in sports and academics at school. I guess we didn't spend all that much time getting acquainted. My father was a rather strict disciplinarian, even though he was also a very good storyteller. He used to entertain us as children with stories of early American life and Indian history. He was a Civil War buff.

You see, living in the Shenandoah Valley, where there was so much a scene of the changing of sides between the North and the South, I got early into stories about the Civil War and the Revolutionary War. American history has always been one of my great interests and he was always interested in American history, and Washington afforded the opportunity. He thoroughly enjoyed telling us about the stories of many of the national treasures here. So he provided that sort of background, but he was a bit of a stern figure.

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My mother was sort of a peacemaker in the family and played a very strong role. But I think her role was more, how do I put it, more important at that stage of the game with my brother. Because the friction within the family was between my father and my brother. My mother was the stable element in that, in my brother's relationship. I had far less difficulty with my father in this regard, which is perhaps understandable. But I'm told by members of the family that my own temperament is much more like my mother's.

*Q: Did your brother go to college at American University too? Was he living at home then?*

LAISE: No, my brother did go to preparatory school. He went away—it was while my mother was still alive, because of the frictions that existed. He had an opportunity through a family friend to apply for, and got admission to Deep Springs Preparatory School in eastern California. It's a very progressive, small school that combines high intellectual or academic qualifications with working out-of-doors. It was founded by a man who made his fortune in Telluride, Colorado, who wanted to train young men for leadership positions, and felt that it was important they have work experience and responsibility at the same time they were educating their minds. It preceded the same sort of thing at Oberlin, I suppose.

*Q: That's very advanced for its time, wasn't it?*

LAISE: Yes. So he went to preparatory school out there. Well, actually, it was Deep Springs College, preparatory school and college. It bracketed both high school and college. He actually graduated from Western High School. He did go to Western High School, graduated from Western High School, and then went to this school in the West. It qualified as the equivalent of two years of college. It was customary that in the halcyon days of the fund that sustained this school, left by the founder of the school, that if you did well there, you'd go on to finish at whatever college of your choice, although it has its headquarters at Cornell in Ithaca, New York. The Telluride Association, of which this is a part, has its headquarters there. I think my brother was thinking of going on to Cornell to finish up, but then again, this was the height of the Depression. I think he felt it was

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necessary to come home and work for a while before going on to school so he did not finish. He continued college here at George Washington.

*Q: Now at the time you were in high school, had you any idea of what you wanted to do with your life, or were you taking a general pre-college course?*

LAISE: I took a pre-college course. I didn't have any idea of what I wanted to do. I knew what I didn't want to do.

*Q: What was that?*

LAISE: I didn't want to teach.

*Q: Did you have any teachers who were particularly influential in your . . .*

LAISE: Not that I recall.

*Q: What about extracurricular activities in high school?*

LAISE: In high school and in college, it was the same, sports. I guess at one stage, because I liked sports so much, I thought it would be fun to make a profession of going into physical education, but I was very strongly talked out of that by everyone. What convinced me was that when I was in college—again, I worked to help myself through college. In those days of the Roosevelt administration, remember, there was NYA, I think it was called.

*Q: NYA, yes, indeed. [National Youth Administration]*

LAISE: And my job in helping earn some of my tuition was teaching sports. That finished that rather rapidly. I rapidly learned the difference between enjoying doing something and teaching it. So that clinched it. Actually my choice of major really was by process of elimination. After all, I was in a liberal arts college. I didn't want to teach. I had to be

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thinking about a career after college. The strongest and the most interesting course offering, as far as I was concerned at American University, was in government. You recall that the School of Public Affairs was established at American University by Arthur Flemming among others—one of the first of its kind, largely at the graduate level, where the top people in their various fields came in the evenings and taught their subjects. There was a downtown school on F Street, right next door to the F Street Club, actually. It had a fairly attractive program. From my friends in the university and others, I got wind of what great courses they were, so I really started taking graduate work for an undergraduate degree. And I continued in graduate work in government, public administration.

*Q: Oh, that must have been interesting.*

LAISE: It really was great, with very interesting courses. And there, there was a very good teacher who had quite a lot of influence, and that was Dr. Katherine Sickler Hudson.

*Q: When you were in college, did you join any particular organizations? Were you in a sorority?*

LAISE: Yes, I was. The other thing I did in college, I forgot to tell you—of course, there was sports—but in both high school and college, I was editor of the newspaper. So that I was in journalism as well.

*Q: Yes, and I'm sure you had a very good grounding in editing and the fine points of grammar.*

LAISE: Yes, putting the newspapers together, that was the great fun, composing a page.

*Q: Now could you tell us about your first real job, so to speak. But before we do that, did you work summers for the government? Were you an intern of any sort in college, or did they have such programs?*

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LAISE: I did work some summers, I don't think every summer. I know I was a camp counselor in Girl Scout camp in New Jersey one summer, that was during college. Yes, I was an intern, but it wasn't summer; it was after I had graduated, in the Department of Agriculture, a government intern.

*Q: That led into your first job?*

LAISE: What led into government as a career was not necessarily that I'd studied government. Although at that time, a government career was really taking a more positive direction. The National Institute of... (Pause) I'm sorry, I can't think of the name, but there was a program to provide for government internships, which was quite new, and to attract professional level people into government. I took, when I was in graduate school, one of the early professional examinations for admission to government service, and passed it. That's how I happened to get into government, because in those days, you didn't get into government except by being on competitive registers and by competitive examination. It was an examination very much like the Foreign Service examination today. It was a very tough one. They did not have the oral interview, but it was a written type of selective examination.

I think I took it in 1938 or '39, but for a year at least, the registers did not move as far as women were concerned. That's one of the areas where I was conscious of the resistance to the appointment of women. During that period of time, I worked as an assistant to Dr. Hudson in the local science department, while at the same time I was doing my graduate work. I completed all the graduate work for a master's degree in government and public administration. But then the defense build-up started—well, first the census was taken in 1940. A great many of these young college students who'd taken the professional exam were swept into the Census Bureau to do a lot of the coding and tabulating of the census. I guess I was there about two months, when the defense build-up began to also overtake Washington. I then got an offer to join a new service in the Civil Service Commission. It was an interdepartmental placement service, a totally new concept, again hiring mostly

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college graduates who had passed this examination, to develop this system, new to government, where all of the qualifications, records of government employees were put on IBM cards, and somehow, within the whole federal government to develop a proper placement system. It was a highly innovative idea. We were all hired to sort of do the coding and developing, to develop the systems for making it possible for this concept to work.

Through this, I got introduced—because I very quickly got out of the coding—into the organization and management type of work here, trying to figure out how to make the information that was on these cards useful to placement officers and how to keep it current and maintain the system. The whole enterprise floundered in the end, because it proved to be very difficult and expensive, and there wasn't enough time, I suppose—time was the important factor on the eve of war—to keep such an enormous piece of machinery in working order. It's never been tried since.

I think probably it was deemed to be impossible, and the cost-benefit ratio wasn't satisfactory enough to try to have a centralized placement system for the whole government. But it did serve one important purpose that perhaps justified the investment in it. It, at least, had gotten all of the qualifications and records on code and on IBM machines, of all government employees across the country, so that when Pearl Harbor happened and it was necessary to have people who had the engineering backgrounds move to Pearl Harbor in large numbers, to undertake the fast reconstruction job that was necessary there, we were able to locate all those people who were in lower priority categories of employment but who had the background and the skills that were needed out there. We were able to locate them, and many of them were persuaded to—we did not have at that stage, the powers of coercion in moving them out, but many of them did respond to the call to go to Pearl Harbor.

*Q: We were talking about how the program justified itself, because you were able to get people to go to Pearl Harbor.*

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LAISE: Well, as background, I was simply mentioning that during the Depression, many people took government jobs in secondary occupational fields just in order to have a job. I recall at the Veterans' Administration, for example, a lot of people who were doing various types of work there who had had backgrounds in the sciences and the engineering that were needed for the Pearl Harbor reconstruction and the war industry but had long since pushed that into the background because during the Depression there was no need for that kind of skill. So it served a purpose of discovery and location of people who had had background and training in what was needed but who were no longer in those occupations because government wasn't in that kind of business.

*Q: So you stopped doing that because the program ceased?*

LAISE: No, no, I stayed on in the Civil Service Commission, and transferred from that to personnel utilization work, which really got into the broader field of personnel administration and how to improve the quality of employment and employees to respond to the war needs. That is, to help give leadership to government industries, and in particular, to the kinds of employee-employer relationships, training programs, placement and promotion programs that both treated everyone fairly and recognized their talents and gave them opportunities to develop all those talents, and to reduce government turnover at a time when the human resources were extremely valuable and could not be wasted in constant friction or constant misuse. So the emphasis of this leadership with the Civil Service Commission in those days was to develop supervisors and leadership in the war industries that would accomplish the purposes of high productivity and lower turnover.

*Q: Since it was during the war, I suppose then women were valued.*

LAISE: Yes, I suppose. I think my experience was somewhat special compared to today, because first of all, it was an expanding occupation. Secondly, women were in demand because there was no danger of their being drafted, and women who had background and training in public administration or whatever were new and rare. I spent three years

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in the Washington office doing those things, developing plans and policies, then, in order to get more of a hands-on understanding of these things and to broaden my experience, I requested and went to one of the field offices that was very active on the West Coast where there were Navy yards, air stations, and all kinds of facilities, civilian-manned facilities. So that I spent two years in Seattle, Washington.

*Q: Did you enjoy it?*

LAISE: Yes, I did, very much. There was not the same stimulation professionally out there as there was in Washington, but certainly the work that needed attention was very urgent, and dealing with some of the military in these installations was especially interesting. Because the military who were often in leadership positions in the army depots or the navy yards tended not to make a distinction between the military approach and the civilian in dealing with civilians. And this often created problems. So the problems were interesting. I would say the professionalism in the field was not as far as it was in Washington, but it was also interesting for me. It was the first time that I really went away from home, that far away from home, and to a new part of the country, which was still filled with children of the pioneers. It was a very different environment altogether, both because the rest of the country was pouring through that part of the world to the Pacific as the war moved to the Pacific—and so it was really, in a sense, where the action was—as well as [being] a totally different environment as far as geography and a beautiful country [go], and people who were still affected by the pioneer spirit and willing to try anything. [There was an] openness in front of you.

*Q: You had been keeping house for your father all of this time in Washington?*

LAISE: I kept house for my father while I was in college (and my brother till he married), but my father remarried in the early forties. When I left to go to Seattle, I was still living with him, but I left to go to Seattle in '44.



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*Q: Did you have a house out there or were there apartment buildings?*

LAISE: Housing in many of these places, of course, was very difficult. Actually, I moved into an apartment with the wife of a friend of one of the officers in the Civil Service Commission, whose husband was at war, who wanted some companionship. We shared an apartment overlooking Puget Sound.

*Q: Did you do any other things for the war, work for the Red Cross or any of that?*

LAISE: No, this was a full-time job.

*Q: Then I believe you told me the other day that you left the government temporarily after that.*

LAISE: Yes, I took a leave of absence. Because when the war was over and things were winding down, I had completed five years in government, and that gave me a permanent Civil Service status. I did not envisage spending the rest of my life doing what I'd been doing. The reductions in force had already begun, and I foresaw that it was likely to become very stultifying, and being in the West, I wanted to take the opportunity of experiencing the West. So a friend of mine encouraged me to come for the summer as a counselor in a riding camp in western Montana on a ranch. I spent the summer with her on a simply marvelous ranch, M-Lazy-V, which was an operating ranch actually, but it also had a camp on it of girls whose main interest was in riding. We did pack trips and all kinds of interesting things. The fact that it was an operating ranch, one had a chance to participate in rounding up cattle and breaking horses and things of that sort. That was great.

Then another friend of mine asked me, when that was finished, to come and help out for the Christmas period in a toy shop that she owned. It was while I was there that I had another call from Washington to come back, to go to Europe. Initially the call came to actually go and help run one of the big DP [displaced persons] camps in Germany, but I

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turned that one down. The second time the call came to help out in the London office of UNRRA in the personnel division, to help wind up the UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation] operation.

So I did come. I left Seattle at that point and came back to Washington to pack up and get some instructions, and went to London.

*Q: What year was this?*

LAISE: That was 1946. I left in February 1946, arrived in London in 1946.

*Q: What was the scope of your duties in London?*

LAISE: When I began, it was in charge of the termination section of the personnel. It was processing American personnel. This was an international organization, although the London office was largely under British leadership. It was to process the people passing through London from all the camps and supply operations in Europe and assure that before they left Europe they had all their problems sorted out. The reason they wanted an American was because there'd been quite a number of complaints by Americans coming through London about the inefficient operations there. But also it meant handling the termination of those British for whom London and England was their home station, so to speak. Then I moved up in the course of this to be deputy of the director of personnel.

*Q: You were in London all together . . .*

LAISE: Two years, '46 to '48. It involved not only the wind-up and processing of people terminating in London or passing through London but then, toward the final stages, I got pulled off of that sort of function and sent to Geneva to help in the turnover of some of the UNRRA functions to the International Refugee Organization, IRO. In London itself, some of the State Department people coming through asked that I help out in developing the policies for other successor organizations, so I got involved in developing policies and

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procedures in the personnel field for not only the IRO, but some of the other successor organizations to UNRRA.

Then I was asked to come back to the department, to continue what amounted to looking after the organization and management programs that the U.S. had in its participation in all the international organizations, which we immediately joined. In other words, the Bureau of United Nations Affairs was set up after the war. The staffing of that bureau then became a matter of some importance in the State Department, and it was an area of expansion. I remember at the time I wasn't sure this was something I wanted to do, because I had several attractive offers to stay on in Europe, and that was very seductive because I enjoyed my experience in England and many of my colleagues did stay on at some of the successor international organizations in Europe, in Paris or Geneva. But I really wanted to come back and touch base with roots. I had a very strong instinct in that direction. When this opportunity came, it happened to be presented in such a way that made it very attractive. It wasn't an all-or-nothing proposition. I was asked to fill in on a temporary basis for a friend, a woman who was going on maternity leave. The job was being held for her, but in the meantime, I had a chance to sample the waters and see whether this was something I wanted to do.

*Q: At the State Department, this job was?*

LAISE: Yes. In those days, it was part of the home service jobs, that is the Civil Service. One of the things, you see, that I had going for me, in addition to experience in an international organization which few had at that stage in the department, I also had Civil Service status, which was a very strong plus and enabled me to go to work much sooner than they were able to get anybody else. That's what opened the door, and then having the door opened, I clearly took to it and stayed in the Bureau of the United Nations Affairs, going as an adviser on U.N. delegations, UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] and WHO [World Health Organization] for seven years.

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*Q: A rich experience that must have been. Were you in the United States all the time, or did you also travel overseas?*

LAISE: No, no, I traveled. I suppose it worked out about six months of the year I was outside of Washington—three months for the General Assembly in New York. I went to the UNESCO general conferences, which usually lasted nearly a month, and the executive board meetings, plus WHO in Geneva. Now that I think about it, the first international meeting I really got roped into was setting up the international authority for the Ruhr. This was handled by the bureau of German affairs, and they had a small meeting in London. This must have been '48, '49, I'm not sure which, and I know that the people that I ran into there who were very active in this were Jacques Reinstein, Wayne Jackson, and Miriam Camp. It was just a very small group, the U.S. group, and my effort was to help to develop the structure and policies regarding setting up an international secretariat for the Ruhr authority.

*Q: That was your second time in London. Did you stay there for very long to do this work?*

LAISE: No, we weren't there terribly long. There were perhaps a couple back and forth trips to the Ruhr area and to London, but we weren't there very long at a time.

*Q: Well, now your first time in London, had you been thrown in socially with the people at the embassy?*

LAISE: Not very much, no, it was a quite separate world. I did have a friend of my brother's who was one of the senior officers at the embassy. He sort of kept an eye on me, in terms of helping me get oriented in England and that sort of thing. But basically, and interestingly enough, this plunge into another world was largely into an English world. I very much enjoyed that and in a sense, preferred to be immersed in the culture that I was in than clinging too closely to the American world.

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I will say, of course, that given the fact that London, England was going through very difficult times immediately after the war and food was a problem, all Americans in London had access to the American embassy mess. So one saw all the embassy people. Actually, I had a shared flat with three other girls, one English. Interestingly enough given my future, one worked for the India High Commission, she was English; one worked at the American embassy; and one was a newspaper correspondent for the Baltimore Sun. So one had a range of contacts, but most of my friendships and social life were with the British.

As a matter of fact, interestingly enough, today being the anniversary of VE Day, the first anniversary of VE Day, May '46, I spent the weekend in Wiltshire, listening to all the goings-on in London to celebrate this, with the director of personnel who was British. [He] subsequently became a member of Parliament and head of the Liberal Party in London, and is now in the House of Lords. That friendship is a continuing one. And they were extremely hospitable to me, in seeing that I made friends and saw something of English life. There was another person at the embassy, besides my brother's friend, who was very important in enlarging my experience; there were two other people, in fact, three. Now memory is coming back. And they were very important. One was one of the ministers at the embassy, Tom Blaisdell, who was economic minister, and his wife also worked in UNRRA. I did several trips with them to the Lake District, to Scotland.

Then Sam Berger was a labor attach# in the embassy at that time. I think the first really important debate I ever heard in one of the great places of London was thanks to Sam Berger. And David Linebaugh, who was in the political section of the embassy. Interestingly enough, the reason I didn't think of it initially was that it didn't draw me into the embassy so much as it did enlarge my perception of the British scene.

*Q: That is interesting. It didn't tempt you to join the Foreign Service yourself?*

LAISE: Not at all. On the contrary, I basically felt that I was glad I did not have the burden of representing the United States. (Laughs)

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*Q: You got it in spades later, didn't you? (Both laugh) Well, how did you become a political officer in New Delhi? Would you like to tell us about that transition?*

LAISE: Now we're sort of clipping along here pretty fast.

*Q: Well, we certainly don't have to. Is there more you'd like to say about your years with the delegation?*

LAISE: Well, yes, I think, about the UNRRA experience. I think it is desirable to mention, particularly for the Radcliffe part of this, and also possibly for your account, the appointment to UNRRA was one that was arranged with the knowledge of what I could contribute and what the situation was there, so that it was not intended to be one of those usual misfits that often happen in international organizations. But because it was done at a fairly high level, and because the communication across the Atlantic was largely on the basis of teletype and the necessity of saving money arose, somehow sex did not enter in. And as a result, when I got to London, there was considerable shock that I turned out to be a woman, even though I had specifically inquired here in the Washington headquarters as to whether or not they knew they were getting a woman. Because from everything I had read about the situation in Britain, a young woman in a position of responsibility, supervising a number of people, including men, seemed a little unusual. I just wanted to make sure that everything was known, and Washington said, "Absolutely." But then when I got to London, I found that that was not the case, the reason being Washington used my shortened name, "Carol." They thought, one "R" and one "L" spelled female, and in Europe that's not the case at all. They thought they were getting a man, obviously. Initially, there was no disposition to giving me the job which I was sent for, because they saw this as a problem.

*Q: What was your title at this time?*

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LAISE: Chief of Terminations Section. My response was a perfectly genuine one. I had come to help out in a situation and I would have to be prepared to do anything they wanted me to do to help out. I didn't have to do that. So they tried to see if there was some other place that they could use me that would create for them less of a problem. Because the acting head was a demobilized major, a graduate of Oxford, and I don't think took very kindly to this development. But the chief of personnel, Joe Grimond, simply felt it was important that I had worked for them, and in the end they went ahead with it. And certainly from my perception, that being settled, it worked out very happily. That's the only time that I'm aware of where sex was a problem.

*Q: And you think that was mainly because of the British rather than the . . .*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Are there any other recollections you have about your job you'd like to share with us at this time? What about the World Health Organization?*

LAISE: Well, now, we were talking about the transfer from working in an international organization to the Department of State. In the Department of State, as I indicated, my service was an extraordinary range of exposure and training, by virtue of the fact that I was serving, either as an adviser to the representative or myself as representative, on committees relating to the budgets of these organizations. What I would, for purposes of analysis, equate to the appropriations committee of the Congress. I served, in effect, on the appropriations committees of all of these three international organizations. The U.S. representative almost always was a member of Congress, because the tradition in the department is that where you have members of Congress on a delegation, they serve on the committee that oversees the appropriation and utilization of U.S. money for the functions of the organization, and then are able to explain to their colleagues in the Congress what the money is being used for. My experience during those years was having to understand our political purposes in the programs of these international organizations,

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political purposes or the program objectives of the United States, ranging from peace-keeping in the U.N. to fundamental education in UNESCO and control of disease in WHO. One had to understand the purposes of our programs and our policies and our interests in these organizations, and then translate them into action, relating resources of the institution—ours were always the largest proportion—seeing that our resources were related to our purposes. This meant you were sitting at the core of these institutions, trying to grapple with them.

Obviously, however many members there are in the organization, every member has a different view about what money should be used for, so the negotiating process was always a very demanding one. And the pressures on the U.S. side were always to keep the expenses down and keep the U.S. contribution down, and in that I might say we shared very often common objectives of our Soviet colleagues. But then how you sliced up the pie for the distribution of those resources was where one would get into the same political fights in the budgetary committee that would appear in the political committee. One had to follow the political debates, coordinate with the handling of the political debate, to make sure that our positions on financial matters served our political purposes. So one was out on the firing line, so to speak, a great deal of the time.

In those years, the conferences were held annually, three months at the General Assembly, and I'd say a month in Paris or wherever UNESCO held its conference, and its conferences took me to Florence, to Uruguay, Montevideo, and eventually to Delhi, as well as Paris. WHO's conferences, [were] at that time almost always in Geneva. So at least five months or six months, counting the executive board meetings of UNESCO and WHO, might be abroad or out of Washington, and the remaining six months here, participating in congressional preparations, justifications, and appearances on the Hill. So it was an extremely broad experience. My first United Nations Assembly was in '48-'49. Our representative on the fifth committee of the U.N. was John Sherman Cooper, Senator Cooper.



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The '51-'52 session of the General Assembly was held in Paris. It was during the McCarthy period, and obviously, one of the really great targets was UNESCO then, as it is today. Dean Rusk was the assistant secretary. He had been preceded by Alger Hiss, so that everybody in that bureau was suspect. Certainly one of the areas of considerable attention and anguish was the area of personnel, not only in the department but also in international organizations. We were required to develop a procedure of clearance of American personnel for international organizations which, given the fact that it was supposed to be international secretariat, not subject to the pressures of international governments, was a very, very difficult thing to negotiate.

On the basis of my negotiating experience in the U.N. organizations and my exposure to world problems, I elected to go into the Foreign Service under the Wriston program. I was very keen to have exposure to the demands of bilateral diplomacy because I was aware that the dynamics of getting resolution to problems in ways that serve the U.S. interest in the international organization sometimes went counter to solution of problems that had a bilateral dimension. I was much more interested in going into depth in some of the bilateral issues and understanding the dynamics of that, rather than resting on the superficial exposure one got to the resolution of considerations at the U.N.

I felt that Asia was important to the future of the United States, and I was interested in going to Asia. I also found on the basis of my negotiating experience that where the traditions were shaped by British administration, it was easier to relate and function as a woman. And equally, I felt that in India there was a goal of hospitality to the notion of a woman. So that everything, plus the fact that UNESCO was going to have its conference in India in 1956, conspired, me and the department together, to make a bid for a post in Delhi. That came about, I'm glad to say, and that is how it happened that I went as first secretary in the embassy.

*Q: In the political section. Did you have any special training at the Institute beforehand?*

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LAISE: None at all.

*Q: Not even in the political department?*

LAISE: Nothing, no. It certainly was in those days very much learning on the job. It was a great learning experience because it was something I had not experienced in quite the same way before. It was just being thrown into the water to sink or swim. But I must say that in the embassy in Delhi, my colleagues were extremely helpful and kind. Because it is a collegial relationships system, I got tremendous support from them in what was expected of me in the reporting assignments. I got very good training there.

Well, you see, there was no mid-career course for a person coming into service. Far as protocol, I had served in the U.N., so that was no particular problem. The great advantage that I had in entering into this situation was I had friendships that opened up very important avenues of access in India.

*Q: You already knew Indian people from your other situations?*

LAISE: From being colleagues on the U.N. delegations, not only in the educational field, but in the political field and the journalistic field.

*Q: Would you like to tell us something about the scope of your duties as a political officer at a large embassy?*

LAISE: I was there for four years. The first two years were primarily on covering internal matters in India. This was a good way of getting to understand India. Now by this I mean the political section usually, in a large embassy, has somebody trying to understand domestic developments and the effect of international relationships on their policies and their stability and their evolution as a country. Since India was relatively [new], well, the year I got there it was just barely ten years old, it was still evolving its many institutions and political systems. So that essentially I was in the position when I first went—working

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with Douglas Heck, for example, who was a very good mentor in education—to follow the fortunes of the Congress Party and then the evolution of the parliamentary system. Now of course, this meant attending party conventions to understand the programs and the point of view of the ruling party in matters that affect [them]. So we attended Congress Party sessions. This meant getting to know all the members of Parliament and Indian leadership, seeing them in their own environment, trying to understand the dynamics of their political system, and reporting it.

Then the last two years, I guess, that I was there, I focused more on the international matters, in which India and the U.S. were in communication. That involved more representation for the government in Delhi and less travel into the countryside. To understand the Indian dealings, political systems and the policies that evolved from it and what its elections meant, we used to follow their elections as well. It was in that context that I got to know Mrs. Gandhi, of course.

But then later on, I moved into handling some of the international issues of India and the West, the most notable one being the driving of the Dalai Lama to India in 1959, and all the Tibetan refugees with which the United States played a considerable role. (Initially, of course, India was leery of United States involvement with the Tibetan refugees, because this was politically such a hot subject for them in their relations with China. I must say that the United States handled it very subtly and understood their position, and essentially what was created was nongovernmental channels through which assistance to refugees could be funneled. I think the Indians came to trust us in that regard.) Then, of course, with the increasing Chinese pressure on the northern borders of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Ladakh, it meant the Indians were requesting military assistance. This led to the Chinese attack in 1962 in Bhutan, when we actually sent a military mission out there to help them.

*Q: I see that you got the Commendatory Service Award in 1960. What specifically was that given to you for?*

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LAISE: (Pause) You know, I don't remember. (Laughter) But I suppose...

*Q: Reporting, perhaps?*

LAISE: No, I suspect that it had to do with a combination, perhaps. President Eisenhower's visit to India in 1959 was the first visit of any president of the United States to India, so therefore, it was very, very important.

The male members of the embassy were so involved in planning the visit in absolute detail, serving as control officers and so on, that I was the only one left in the embassy who was worried about what they were going to talk about, namely the issues. So I think it may well have been for my role in helping to shape policy with regard to the Tibetan refugees, with reporting on the meaning of the Chinese activities on the border and its implications for India and the United States which culminated in the president's visit in 1959, and my role in the presidential visit. I guess that must have been it.

*Q: How many people were in the political section in New Delhi at that time? Was it a large section?*

LAISE: Well, let's see. (Long pause) I don't know what you'd consider large, really. I suspect that there were three first secretaries and probably two seconds.

*Q: So you were at what level? You were a first secretary but you were number two?*

LAISE: The political section was split between those following the domestic involvements and those following the international. It wasn't in any sense hierarchical.

*Q: I was thinking specifically of efficiency reports. Did you have to write efficiency reports for the more junior members?*

LAISE: I was always with my political counselor and he wrote all the efficiency reports.

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*Q: Did you feel any bias from your men colleagues or were you just “one of the boys?”*

LAISE: I don't put it that way. (Chuckles) No, as I say, I think I was extremely fortunate in that I was given every encouragement. The minister at that time was Win Brown and the counselor was Edward P. Maffitt. My colleagues were all extremely helpful and they shared alike. The only problem that I ran into in India was, (and it wasn't a problem, it was just a nuisance) given the tendency in political circles to somehow assume that women in political sections were spies, I had sometimes hit the Communist press, or the Communist-supported press, as being Mata Hari in the U.S. embassy at Delhi.

*Q: Oh, for heaven's sake!*

LAISE: And it still goes on.

*Q: Does it really?*

LAISE: It comes back again and again. In fact, whenever there is a big CIA plot, they go back to their files—it totally comes from the left—they dig up stuff that then gets repeated and repeated and repeated. One certainly gets the notion of the lie, and it's now been built up that somehow or another, because of my activities in financing the election of one of Mrs. Gandhi's opponents, who was variously ascribed to different provinces, I was thrown out of India!

Well, the first really major story on this erupted after I had left India. I remember coming back from a trip on a senior seminar, and going to a party at the Indian Embassy, and the ambassador who was a very good friend of one of the Nehru family, sort of gleefully holding up his story from the Blitz about my being the Mata Hari of the Indian Embassy. They changed the spelling of the name, but it was very clear who they were talking about. As far as I recall, from the way that the Indian press sort of dug it out, a European woman, (and they include us in that category) was seen to be campaigning for Ashok Mehta who was a member of the opposition in the state of the UP [Uttar Pradesh]. Then they go

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through the list of the embassies to see where there is a woman and find that on an old embassy list my name was on the list as first secretary, political. So they then produced that as the story.

Galbraith at the time was ambassador, and raised the question with the editor of the newspaper about this. He said, "Well, why didn't he check his facts?" There was no truth in it. I wasn't even in the country. He shrugged his shoulder, and said, "Well, you know, it makes it less interesting," and dismissed it. Then an opposition newspaper dug out the story of what really happened. A member of the same party as this gentleman in the opposition, an Indian, of course, was married to an Austrian, and they were campaigning for him. She was the one who started this in the first place. But then it didn't die there. No, it was raised then as a question in parliament and Mr. Nehru responded and dismissed the whole thing, and said, "What an irresponsible paper this was anyway." And that ended that, but you see, that ended it as far as the substance was concerned, but then the custom is for it to repeat itself in various versions until it just becomes a legend. So it still gets regurgitated. I got a copy of it from someplace, somebody in India, only within the last year.

*Q: Really, twenty-five years later!*

LAISE: Yes, isn't it amazing!

*Q: Ridiculous, yes, terrible. It's been suggested that FSOs have to function in two different ways, one way in the States and one way overseas. Overseas, you're doing the reporting and so forth, but you're not responsible for policy, which is done here. And I have heard it said that often overseas, you have to be more "feminine." That is, the men do too, because they must be conciliatory and so forth, and not make waves.*

LAISE: You're not implying that men should be more feminine?

*Q: Yes, yes, actually in this context.*

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LAISE: I don't consider grace as purely a female quality.

*Q: I don't either, but is it possible that because women are brought up to be more conciliating, it makes for greater success overseas, and less success back in the department? Do you think there's any truth to that?*

LAISE: (Pause) You know, quite frankly, I don't accept the thesis to begin with, and I certainly don't accept the division of it on a sex line. Nobody, I think, demonstrates it better than my husband. I do not consider that courtesy and the qualities of consideration, that are a part of seeking to reconcile differences, are in any way antithetical to the need to be firm and effective in holding your opinion or advancing your point of view, whether in the bureaucracy at Washington or in foreign cultures.

*Q: No, I quite agree. I think I'm giving you the wrong idea. Putting it briefly, I guess, it is, do you have to switch gears when you go overseas, just within yourself, of course? Back here, doesn't one have to be more aggressive to get ahead? Because there is a final arbiter here, and things get bumped upstairs and upstairs and upstairs, until somebody makes a decision. Do you think you function the same way here as you do overseas? A male ambassador brought this up to me, and suggested that I ask it of women to see how they felt, which is why I'm putting it to you. He feels there are two different ways that an FSO functions.*

LAISE: I think it is a perfectly natural thing, that when you're functioning in your own culture, the givens are understood and you don't have to explain yourself, you can proceed at a speed without having to worry about perceptions as to how you're viewed. Whereas in a foreign culture, even a culture from a common background such as England, you have to function with some understanding of the norms of that culture. But it isn't a conscious thing. It's no different from what you are in your family and what you are in the broader social world. What I'm trying to say is that they are not ones that are consciously calculating and create strains. No, you're just playing a different tune of the same music,

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and the same notes are used. Therefore, I think the basic grounding of qualities serves well in both places. It's the notes that you emphasize that are important in terms of success, I'd say.

—

*Q: Would you repeat the remark you made yesterday about a first secretary's job?*

LAISE: I guess, as you were leaving, I remarked that I thought it was the best job in the service, because, at least in New Delhi, it was high-enough ranking to be included in interesting social functions, but not so high that one had to engage in representation for its own sake and go to a lot of social functions that were pro-forma and not very interesting.

*Q: (Chuckles) I thought that was good to have for the record. Were there any other women officers at the post when you were there?*

LAISE: No, I don't think so, when I was there. There were, during my period of service in South Asia, either in New Delhi or in Washington. When I was in Washington (I was deputy director and director of the Division of South Asian Affairs), there were a number of women, but we did not serve concurrently. One was Jane Coon, who is now an ambassador, and the other was Anita Love, who was an economic officer, but I think she didn't stay in the service.

*Q: And naturally you had your own secretary, as you do in all jobs. There was no problem with a woman secretary, was there? She didn't feel that she would rather be working for a man or anything of that sort?*

LAISE: You're talking about Delhi? Well, first of all, I didn't have my own secretary. We shared a secretary; I usually did with another officer. I really couldn't tell you. In any case, she was working for a man as well as a woman. I certainly didn't have any sense of a problem.



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*Q: Could you tell us a little about the role of women in India? That would be in the sixties.*

LAISE: Well, of course, the women were encouraged during the independence movement to play a role in the Congress Party. There were many prominent women in the Congress Party. As a consequence, when India achieved its independence, there were women in prominent positions in the Indian government; there were women in their Foreign Service. One of my best friends, Indian friends, was one of the first women, if not the first, in the Indian Foreign Service, but she had to resign, as ours had to do up until the seventies, when she married. That no longer obtains in the Indian Service any more than it does in ours. So Indian women were encouraged to have a professional role, and I had a number of Indian friends who were in journalism and radio and in the foreign service. Education, health and social welfare were the areas that I can think of quickly.

You see, at least in the families in India where they were of the educated elite, shall we say, there was a structure that enabled women to work and at the same time have families, because with the joint family system there was a support system for rearing children that made it easier for women to enter professions than sometimes it was here, where choices had to be made very often on economic grounds because of the inability to afford the kind of help that was necessary here. Whereas in India, at that time, at any rate, both the joint family system and the availability of servants made it possible for children to be properly looked after and reared while the parents were working.

*Q: When you say "joint family system," is that a multi-generational family? Exactly what is that?*

LAISE: Yes, no, no. It's an extended family system that's characteristic of many of the Eastern cultures, and probably also Latin American, where extended family not only very often lives together in the same area, but the responsibilities of the young to the old, and vice versa, is very much practiced.

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*Q: And there is a universal system of education for girls in India?*

LAISE: Oh yes, there is.

*Q: It's rather strange, isn't it, if you stop to think about it, because it would seem that they have evolved even more than the British women under whom they were for so many years.*

LAISE: Well, of course, it's true in Britain today, too. There's universal education and India, after all, achieved independence in '47, and I think the pattern adopted was based on the liberal practices, the progressive practices of the Western democracies. The aim was certainly universal education. That does not mean there is universal education, largely, in many cases, for economic reasons. But there certainly is no sex bar.

*Q: No, I just had been under the impression that higher education for women is not the norm in England, whereas it seems to be in India, or is that an erroneous assumption on my part?*

LAISE: I am no authority on this subject, but my impression is that higher education is harder to come by in England for men and women. A tradition, as in the United States, of swelling ranks of students going to higher education because of a state university system and the community colleges and so on which make it economically possible, just didn't exist in England. So that there's not the same sort of tradition of young people going to college for higher education as there is here. But education in India is very much sought after, because it was viewed as an avenue to better jobs, and education is also highly valued in their value system. The Brahminical tradition puts a high premium on education. Therefore, there is, I think, much more of a move in India of students toward higher education. The universities proliferated, in fact, to such an extent that they were giving in to pressures for admission and very serious questions have arisen about the standards of education in India. But that is a different question.

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*Q: Are they state supported, these new universities?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Did you have a very active social life as a first secretary?*

LAISE: I don't know quite what you mean.

*Q: Visiting Indian families, families of diplomatic peers, that sort of thing. Were there a great many formal dinners and receptions that you had to go to?*

LAISE: Let's put it this way: there certainly was the opportunity for it. However, keeping in mind that my first two years in India were in the area of understanding the evolution of Indian democracy and policies, my social life was more related to Indian functions and Indian friends than to the diplomatic community. In fact, there was a very large diplomatic community, and I elected to give less priority to social life in the diplomatic community and really found my place, in both work and pleasure, in the Indian community.

*Q: You have said you traveled a great deal. That must have been very interesting too.*

LAISE: I traveled by car and by train.

*Q: They have a very good train system, don't they?*

LAISE: Wonderful trains. Yes, in fact, that's a good way to see India.

*Q: Did you come back to Washington very often while you were there? Just once on home leave?*

LAISE: Just, I think, once on home leave. I had promotion board duty in connection with home leave in 1958, I guess it was, so I was home for longer than the usual period of time.

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But my recollection was that I came home only in connection with home leave and that assignment.

*Q: Are there any other recollections you have about your stay in India you'd like to share?*

LAISE: (Pause) Reflecting on our conversation yesterday, I think one point perhaps is worth making about the Eisenhower visit. One of my concerns, which I think got reflected in my reporting perhaps contributed to an ultimate outcome that transformed that visit into the kind of long term success that served the U.S. interest. I was very struck during the course of that visit by the fact that, since the president was in his last year in office and it was a Democratic-controlled Congress, when he came, he was not able to offer anything to the Indians of a concrete nature, to undergird his protestations of friendship and concern for India's security.

I might say that the visit came at a psychological moment that transformed it into a great experience. India, adopting a non-aligned policy, was feeling very lonesome at that stage, given the fact of the incursions that the Chinese had made on its borders in the North in 1959 and the driving of the Dalai Lama out of Tibet. That was on the one hand; on the other hand, the familiar support and prop that India had always looked to in Great Britain had become a diminishing value as a result of the decline in British fortunes after World War II and the attempt of Britain and France in regard to the Suez Canal. Both of those factors caused Britain to appear in Indian eyes as less of a bulwark in their calculations, and caused them to turn more attention toward the United States.

Those two factors meant that when the president of the United States paid his first visit to India, the president being such a well-known hero as President Eisenhower, the outpouring of enthusiasm was absolutely overwhelming. It was very difficult for us to get to the airport even to meet him because of the blockage of the road with the crowds and the traffic. And indeed, nobody of importance would have been there on time if he had not been delayed in his arrival by a holdup in Afghanistan. Then he rode in with the prime

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minister and the president of India to the center of Delhi at Connaught Place. The crowds were just so great that the entourage could not move. Our security people were, of course, wild. Mr. Nehru got out of the car and used his stick in a good humored way to push the crowd away so the car could get through. I've heard my husband say that the president had never seen anything like it. It was a great experience.

But to continue with the substantive aspects of his visit: During that period of time, I entertained some of our newspaper correspondents who were accompanying the President. They were extremely distressed at the sort of platitudinous nature of his speech to the Parliament, proclaiming friendship for India and understanding of its problems without any follow through in a concrete sense.

Yet on the other hand, the Indians were just overjoyed with this, the approach of the president in proclaiming and saying the things they wanted to hear without coming as "Greeks bearing gifts," because that would have made it very embarrassing, and in their terms, would have detracted from the sentiments expressed. So it was my task and the task of the embassy to convey to Washington and to keep reminding them after the President had left, the fact that while the visit was a wild success and viewed all the way around as outstanding, the sentiments voiced had conveyed to the Indians a pledge of friendship. To them, the terms of friendship meant that one understood enough to follow through with the kind of specific and tangible gestures that would help them over some of their problems. Therefore, there was joy that we did not come as "Greeks bearing gifts," but there was expected return farther down the line.

The message got through, and the result was that six months after the president's visit, the administration and the Congress did approve a four-year PL 480 program for India to enable it to conduct some agricultural reforms that were needed by assuring them a supply of grain for four years. I think it amounted to a shipload of grain a day for four years to keep their stores of grain high enough to enable them to take some stringent measures in

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agricultural reform. But that was seen as a kind of responsiveness to Indian requirements that a friend could make, the kind of friendship that was pledged by the president.

*Q: Yes. That must have had quite an impact all around, I should think.*

LAISE: Yes, it was an unforgettable experience for everybody who was there. Now there was another visit, and as long as we're continuing to deal with the substantive problems, I might as well go on with this, and we can turn later to some of the living aspects. The other memorable visit was the visit of Vice-President Johnson in 1961. He had been on a mission at the instance of the president, in Southeast Asia, and on his way back to the United States, he stopped in India. It was a very brief stop, but it was a very memorable stop. I believe it was the stop when in Pakistan he invited the camel driver to visit the United States.

*Q: (Chuckles) I remember that, yes.*

LAISE: Which had all kinds of repercussions. In the case of India, he visited the Taj Mahal and a village very near Agra. My most vivid recollection was more social than substantive. A reception was given for him at the embassy residence. The ambassador was then Ambassador Galbraith. Since at that stage I was the member of the embassy staff who had been longest in place and knew the most, had the widest acquaintances as a result of my work and travels in India, the ambassador laid on me the responsibility to introduce the vice president to everybody important in Delhi, because there was not a receiving line. He came late and he came into the garden, and all of the guests were collected in the garden. It was a very difficult job, because the custom, and it seems to be a custom in an occasion like this, that when an important entourage comes into a party, everybody falls away so they're not within reach to introduce. It was a very difficult experience of darting into the crowd and trying to pull people into the circle, to introduce them to Vice President and Mrs. Johnson. But it was, I think, on the whole, a thoroughly satisfactory experience all around, but it was a little nerve-racking at the time.

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*Q: Oh, I can imagine.*

LAISE: About the living arrangements, the whole time I was in Delhi, I lived in a part of one of the lovely old bungalows that the British had built there, in a tree-shaded area of New Delhi not very far from the embassy residence or the embassy. It had a garden. It was divided essentially into three apartments, and initially, I had the smallest apartment.

I remember when the charg<sup>#</sup>, Fred Bartlett, and his wife came to visit on a social occasion when I was entertaining some Indian friends, he was pretty shocked to see the arrangement. He thought it was not suitable for a first secretary, because you had to walk through the bedroom in order to get into the living room, the way that particular apartment was structured. I think he instituted action to see that I moved to a larger apartment on the front of the house when it became vacant, which was perhaps more appropriate for entertaining. It had the disadvantage of not being on the garden side. However, I did have a patio where I could entertain out-of-doors, as well as in. But it was a modest type of an apartment. I had a cook/bearer, the same one the whole time I was there.

I did do a great deal of informal entertainment, mainly related to bringing Americans, visiting Americans very often, and journalists and academicians, and Indians together to discuss issues and development, economic problems in India, and political trends in India. But usually it was the kind of entertainment related to developing a better understanding of their political institutions, their aspirations and their economic development, in order to be able to make my contribution to reporting to Washington on matters that were of interest to the United States, relating to the kind of policies the United States was following, particularly in the aid field.

*Q: What sort of parties did you find were most suited for this?*

LAISE: There was a range, depending on the circumstances. The working hours in India, and this is also true in Nepal when I later went there, usually were ten to five with no break

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for lunch. This tended to mean that coffee hour before work was the time when I would call on members of Parliament or they would drop in on their way to work, and equally tea at the completion of work. It was an appropriate form of entertainment, because as you know, many Indians have different dietary requirements and strictures. And also, it was a basis of meeting which could be mutual. In other words, if I were to go to their places, it would be for tea or coffee, and no obligation was incurred on either side. So a lot of it was that.

For those who functioned in hours that were more along the lines of the West and had a lunch break, which would be a different group of people, and especially visitors who wanted to meet their counterparts, lunch was a very open way in which to entertain. Dinners usually were informal. Buffet dinners were very much more the custom in India than the sit-down dinners, partly because it was a cooler way of spending those hours. And also because I had a very small dining room, so the parties were never large, and provided an opportunity for a real exchange.

*Q: And you had representational allowance, I presume.*

LAISE: No, the embassy did. You would put in a claim, and get reimbursed if the number of foreign visitors exceeded the number of Americans present.

*Q: You weren't given a set amount then?*

LAISE: No.

*Q: The embassy owned the apartment, or rented it for you?*

LAISE: It owned it.

*Q: Did you find any particular problems that were unique to a woman living alone overseas?*



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LAISE: (Long pause) Well, I really didn't encounter anything special that I can recall, except one thing that I think is not surprising in a traditional society, as India is and was, and where form is quite important. I think one had to be aware of the fact that a woman living alone, and especially a Western woman living alone, had to observe certain proprieties, for there was a very great tendency to assume that the activities going on reinforced their notion of the promiscuity of the Western women.

*Q: Yes, yes, you had to be very aware of that.*

LAISE: I think one had to be very aware of that because of the patterns and the customs. It meant the importance of great discretion in one's entertaining style and also in one's conduct.

*Q: Well, in connection with that, were you supposed to have a host to be your counterpart when you entertained, or was that acceptable that you would be the sole host of the evening?*

LAISE: There was no requirement of that. Since at that time innocent Indian women didn't socialize at Western parties as much as perhaps they might today, for whatever reason, there never was any shortage of male guests to fill out a dinner party, let's say.

*Q: What about your health while you were in India? Did you experience any particular problems there?*

LAISE: No. Of course, I had dysentery; both kinds, bacterial. . . and what is it? Bacterial and amoebic. But, you know, I got over it. It never plagued me very much, and it never plagued me subsequently.

*Q: Did you find that. . .or can you make such a judgment, that the women were healthier or less healthy than the men at the post?*

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LAISE: I don't have any idea about that. I don't have any impression of any great problems in the professional service or in the embassy staff. I don't recall if there was tremendous problem with illness.

*Q: How were you treated for your amoebas? Were you treated at the post by the doctor?*

LAISE: Yes, yes.

*Q: I guess the State Department is quite an expert in amoebas.*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: When you traveled, were you alone or did you go with other people? Was it considered proper for you to travel by yourself, or safe, I should say.*

LAISE: Well, I never felt unsafe in India. But most of my traveling was with friends. I went on various holidays in the North, in the Himalayan region, with Indian friends, or traveled by train with an Indian friend with whom I was very close. I mentioned her before, she had been in the Indian Foreign Service. She opened up a great deal of understanding of part of India that I normally would not be able to contact because of lack of language. She herself was, in addition to being a career officer, or had been a career officer, also a sociologist and a person of great distinction in her field, and had a great feel for Indian art and Indian philosophy and culture. So I was very privileged to have a friendship with her, and to have been able to see rural India with and through the eyes of someone who related very well to women and who understood their traditions and their values and was able to interpret it in a context for me.

*Q: Oh, that must have been a wonderful . . .*

LAISE: It was a marvelous experience, yes.

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*Q: And you went to the Taj Mahal. Is it as lovely as . . .*

LAISE: Yes. Beautiful. This Indian friend, I might say, has for several years been at Radcliffe at the Bunting Institute. So they know her very well there. Her name is Rama Mehta.

*Q: Like Zubin Mehta? What sort of things did you do for recreation?*

LAISE: Golf. That's where I took up golf for the first time, the most beautiful golf course in Delhi. First of all, it's very centrally located, and it's in and around a lot of old mosques. In the early morning the birds would just sing. The sound of the birds and the beauty of the birds is in addition to the golf game, so that just walking was fun, quite apart from the golf. Golf and tennis were the major sports.

*Q: Swimming?*

LAISE: Not very much, because, well, again, there's the problem with the water. So it didn't make much sense to take all these precautions about water and then go swimming.

*Q: You had to boil water? That sort of thing?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: When you did entertain, did you have to outline for the cook what he should do, or was he able to . . .*

LAISE: Yes, always. You had to give them the menus, yes.

*Q: Did you ever go to the Vale of Kashmir and stay on a houseboat?*

LAISE: Yes, I did. That too was beautiful. However, my stay there was very short and quite tragic, because again, I went with this friend that I was mentioning. When we arrived there,

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we got the news that her father, who happened to be there, and a prominent Indian, had died of a heart attack that morning. And so it basically consisted of dealing with a very sad situation. So my association with Kashmir is not the same as . . .

*Q: Not the most fortunate. (Pause) I don't think I've brought it up before: Did you have a mentor all the time you were working in the department, or did your career evolve by itself?*

LAISE: No, I think it just grew like Topsy. But I have to say that I did receive great encouragement from various people that need to be mentioned. Initially, in the Department, the two that stand out in the Bureau of United Nations Affairs are Bill Hall, William Hall, and Walter Kotschnig. Then Fran Wilcox certainly was one who gave encouragement.

*Q: Is Fran a man or a woman?*

LAISE: A man.

*Q: Francis Wilcox. It's difficult with the name of Francis.*

LAISE: Yes, he just died recently of a heart attack. He was aide to somebody who's head of the staff at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee under Fulbright, and then he became assistant secretary of state for the United Nations. (Pause). In Delhi, I think it was particularly Winthrop Brown. He was the minister, the DCM [deputy chief of mission].

*Q: I see. Did you find that your work in the States, all of the many interesting jobs you had, were very relevant to what you did overseas? Or did you have to learn a whole new set of work skills?*

LAISE: Well, I guess they weren't all that different; the emphasis was different. If we go back to, say, when I started in the international field, in UNRRA, I was mainly involved in what we in the department would call program management. Whereas when I moved into the department and in the embassy in New Delhi, I moved in a different direction.

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The skills required in the Bureau of the United Nations Affairs were intellectual skills of writing and conceptualizing and justifying actions on the one hand, and on the other hand, negotiating and political—what do you call it? I don't want to say political bargaining. Political, (Pause) well, that's really what it was, I suppose, trying to resolve differences in approach and differences in semantics, and resolutions, and that sort of thing. It was very much developing the contacts as well as being able to persuade others to compromise, to meet agreed solutions.

Then in the embassy at Delhi, it was very much a matter of developing relationships and writing skills and analytical skills, to be able to synthesize for Washington information that related to policy matters affecting U.S. interests. So that's as I see it. Those were the skills that were required, and they were perhaps used in a different sense in all these places but essentially they all involved the major skills that are required in our profession to rise to the top. It covered the spectrum between the program management skills, the interpersonal relationships, and the intellectual skills. I will say that certainly there was more development of the intellectual skills in the Department than in the UNRRA assignment.

*Q: Summing up, how would you describe the Indian experience, both personal and professional?*

LAISE: I think it's obvious from what I have recounted that the Indian experience was a very challenging one. It was one that afforded personal growth by my good fortune in my friendships. And certainly the quality and the depth of the Indian culture constitutes a challenge to anyone coming from the West. In extending myself to understand, it also required of me to understand our own culture much better. Therefore, it was the kind of challenge that developed greater depth in my understanding of my own culture as well as the Indian culture. And then it brought with it some very deep and continuing friendships.

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As far as the professional experience is concerned, I think it is equally evident that we always had outstanding leadership in our embassy in Delhi while I was there. It ranged from Senator Cooper to Ellsworth to Galbraith. I learned a great deal about the conduct of bilateral diplomacy, both the importance in presenting U.S. views, of accuracy, the importance of integrity in relation to the reporting, not only of the U.S. scene, but also being faithful to the understanding one has of the Indian scene, and reporting that with honesty.

(Pause) Also, the embassy at Delhi had a dimension, a large dimension in those days, that was important to understand and develop, you know, broaden my experience, in that a great many of the economic and commercial interests of the United States had to be funneled through the embassy rather than, as in other countries of the world, taking place between business organizations without any regard to the embassy. This grew out of the nature of the Indian system and the highly centralized control the Indians exercised over their economic policy. It meant that the embassy was called upon to open doors and to assist in developing policies that would improve the commercial relationships between India and the United States. So that this equally brought certainly the economic dimension into my job, not only the commercial dimension, but then we had very large economic development programs there in that time. And so, the economic development aspect of our role in India was extremely important.

Indeed, I was there at a period of time when India and U.S. relations were perhaps the best that they have ever been. India was seen in U.S. calculations as being an important democratic alternative in economic development to China. Therefore, it constituted a model, a potential model of economic development along democratic lines that were very important to our interest to foster. This meant that that period of time was a very creative one, as well as a very, on the whole, a very beneficial one in our relationship.

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*Q: The other day we had reached the point of your return to the States, when you went to the Senior Seminar. That would be in 1961. Would you like to tell a little about that?*

LAISE: Yes, right. Well, the Senior Seminar is the senior-most training program for the State Department. But it also includes representatives of other government agencies. It remains small however, and I think the total number at the time I was there was about twenty-one. At that time there was only one woman every year. I didn't have the sense it was a token woman. I had a sense that, given the paucity of the numbers of women in the higher ranks, it just was not likely... (Slight break on tape)

The Senior Seminar is designed for senior officers who were expected to go on to higher positions, to broaden their horizons on the one hand, in enabling them to cope more effectively with the tasks that lie ahead, but also, for those who had been overseas for some extended period of time (and I had been overseas for four years in India and fairly absorbed in Asia and Asian problems) it is a way of re-educating officers about what's happened in the United States. So it provides an opportunity to read, study, hear lectures, exchange views and write papers on matters that impinge upon American foreign policy and developments that impinge upon American foreign policy. For me, that period was very important, and particularly valuable because it coincided with a change in administration from the Eisenhower administration to the Kennedy administration.

The other major trend that I remember was to learn how much impact some very distinguished political scientists who had been refugees from Europe during the war were now having on American thinking about American strategy and policy; people like Hans Morgenthau and others of that school. It seemed to me that they were reintroducing a "real politique" into American thinking about foreign policy. Since we had most of these people come to lecture, it was a very stimulating experience.

*Q: It must have been. And that lasts an academic year?*

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LAISE: Yes, an academic year, right.

*Q: What traveling did you do in connection with it? Can you select your own destinations?*

LAISE: No, the group travels as a group to various—it did then at any rate—to various points in the United States. The trips that I particularly remember were of course to NORAD [North American Air Defense System] and SAC [Strategic Air Command] in Nebraska, to see the military operations there. We did a trip to California and visited some of the industries there, including the vineyards where there was a large export consideration that was important for American business. We also visited North Carolina, the tobacco industry, the military installations there. We visited Puerto Rico, and I think we also went to some of the nearby installations, but those were the ones that stand out in memory. I did my project on trying to get the European perspective on the prospects of developing the U.S.-European partnership at that particular time, because the Kennedy administration was pushing very hard in GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] for trade, more open trade, and pushing in Congress for legislation to support our trade position. Because of this, there was a great deal being written and talked about of the grand alliance between the United States and Europe.

Since I had been so far away from Europe for four or five years, I was interested in finding out what had taken place in Europe. And particularly at that time, the center of Europe's attention was the formation of the economic community. The interesting thing to me was how that related to U.S. interest and the U.S. perception of the partnership. So I undertook to try to go to Europe and get the European perspective on the U.S. relationship. Because I, having been in India, was very well aware that when you're on the spot, the perspective looks very different from what it does at home. Indeed, it turned out to be the same on the whole question of the U.S.-European relationship. Europe at that time was much more preoccupied with organizing itself than it was with the U.S. timetable to move ahead, in terms of the relationship with the United States.



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Everywhere I went, the question was whether De Gaulle was going to permit Britain to come into the economic community at that time. De Gaulle did not. But in the process, I had many interesting interviews in France, Germany and the Benelux countries, and in England. I did not go to Italy. I was able to build on relationships that I had built in my U.N. experience, so that I was not totally dependent on embassy contacts, and looking at it strictly from embassy sources. The result was very, very interesting and very illuminating.

*Q: You wrote a paper on this?*

LAISE: Yes, I did.

*Q: What becomes of these papers after they're written? Do they stay at FSI [Foreign Service Institute]?*

LAISE: I presume they have a copy. I have a copy somewhere in my trunk in Vermont.

*Q: Just for the record I want to state here that you had been promoted before you came back to the States. You were promoted in February of 1961 to an FSO 2. Is that correct?*

LAISE: Well, I've lost track of my timetable.

*Q: Yes, but that would be why you were eligible for the Senior Seminar?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Is that true you have to be "2" or higher?*

LAISE: I think so, yes. That doesn't mean anything these days, because the numbers have changed, as you know, in the new Foreign Service Act.

*Q: Yes, it's now called counselor.*

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LAISE: Yes, but it's the senior threshold, and generally speaking, the Senior Seminar is in connection with passing over the senior threshold.

*Q: I see. When did you find out what your next assignment was going to be?*

LAISE: Obviously I didn't know so much about it then. I know a good deal more about it now, having been in the office of the director general. The forward planning of assignments of people in the Senior Seminar was very important, not only to people in the Seminar, but for the perception of the rest of the Service that service in the Seminar does indeed have its rewards in terms of the kinds of appointments that one gets. It is not always possible, and a lot of people go rather late in their tour there, before assignments are forthcoming. I don't think that my onward assignment came terribly early, and I certainly wasn't exercising any particular influence in trying to direct how it might come out.

However, my assignment came about in a rather curious way. It so happened that within the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs, there was apparently a number of problems in which the new administration felt that the bureau was not being innovative and responsive enough to the initiatives that the White House and the new ambassador, John Kenneth Galbraith, thought were desirable. As a consequence of the expressed dissatisfactions, so far as I can gather, a number of personnel changes were made in the bureau. This opened up a position for which I was a natural, having just come back from Delhi, so I was appointed as deputy director of South Asian Affairs.

*Q: I gather from reading and what I heard indirectly that the Kennedy years really shook things up in the department, didn't they?*

LAISE: Well, yes, they did, but it's not unusual. It seems to me every administration coming in wants to rediscover the wheel and shake things up because they think the department is fairly stuffy, a stuffy fudge factory, a bowl of jelly, you name it. All it indicates to me is that, on the whole, they simply don't understand the requirements laid on

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the department, and that in large measure, I think, accounts for all their frustrations. The department is, in a sense, a staff arm to the president, and does not have line responsibility. Their product is advice to the president, and that means that their advice and their product has to be coordinated with a great many other branches of the government, particularly defense, agriculture, commerce, labor, treasury, and sometimes justice. And as a consequence, it's a slow business. I'm sure, sitting in the White House, when you want to get things done, it seems incredibly protean. But diplomacy is protean. I'm afraid presidents just don't like to accept the fact.

*Q: So morale plummets until they get back on the track again. Would you describe the position of deputy director? And you eventually became the director . . .*

LAISE: Well, at that time, the Division of South Asian Affairs comprised the PANIC countries, as we called them, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, India, and Ceylon. It was the task of the division to oversee the desk officers for each one of those countries, and to coordinate positions and policy recommendations affecting that area. It has subsequently been changed, as you know, so that the coordination takes place at the deputy assistant secretary level rather than at the division level so that, in effect, the responsibility of the deputy director and the director at that time were pretty much what one of the deputy assistant secretaries does today. They are the point in Washington which backstops the embassies for those countries, and the focal point in Washington for formulation of policy relating to those countries.

At the particular period of time that I was there, as deputy to Turner Cameron, it was a fruitful combination because Turner Cameron came to the division from a European bureau and he had served, I think, one tour in Ceylon, but he had not had much experience in South Asia, so that he brought a broader perspective to the problems of the area, which is one of the things that the new administration wanted. He had to rely upon me for a greater knowledge of the problems of the major countries in the area, namely India and Pakistan.

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At the time that I was there, it was a very active and exciting time, because the Chinese made even deeper incursions into India than they had in 1959. In 1962, at the same time, in fact very shortly after I went in as deputy director of the bureau, the Chinese invaded Northeast India and then penetrated rather deeply into Northeast India. It happened at exactly the same time as the Cuban missile crisis.

*Q: That's right; that's why the eyes of the world weren't focused on it.*

LAISE: That is correct. It was a very curious experience. I remember it was on a weekend, and I was, I guess, the duty officer for the weekend. The assistant secretary was there and we were trying to deal with the problems that our ambassadors were raising out there because of this happening. But the garage of the State Department was filled with limousines and we knew that something was happening, and it wasn't our area, because there were very few working on the problem. But the fact of the Chinese action radically affected, of course, our relationship with India and Pakistan, because India, who had already appealed while I was still in Delhi to America for assistance in the military field, now made its appeal even more extensive. And in fact, a military mission did go out to India. We had a MAAG [Military Advisory and Assistance Group] program in India, and that was the first time that we had had such a program. Naturally, of course, all of this impacted on Pakistan and our relationship with Pakistan, and raised concerns in Pakistan about their relationship with us. So that the period from 1962 onward was one that was a very active period in our diplomacy in that area.

In fact, the ambassador requested my return to India, because with the turnover of personnel that had taken place, there were very few that had the extensive contacts that I had had. So I went back for three months to help out during that period of time in the embassy, to enable the embassy to extend its reach and assure that all the information that it needed to feed into Washington was coming in. The invasion occurred in October, I think it was, of 1962, and I was there from October until the end of January '63.

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Following that, the department was engaged in a certain amount of high level negotiations with the British and, in particular, as well as the Indians and the Pakistanis, to try to meet the Chinese problem and, at the same time, not to exacerbate the problems of India and Pakistan. What that seemed to us to require was some attention to the Kashmir problem. So that we revived efforts to try to work out a solution to the Kashmir problem at that period of time.

During that course of time, not only was I on a special assignment in Delhi, but I also went to London for talks about the nature and extent of the military assistance we would render, in a way that would bolster India's confidence and yet not be a threat to Pakistan. I then joined in the Harriman mission and went on to Delhi to assist the embassy there in developing programs. It was a fairly active period. During that period of time also, Governor Harriman and Duncan Sandys from the United Kingdom also sought to reactivate negotiations on the Kashmir problem. I was part of those talks. This was between Mr. Nehru and President Ayub, meaning Mr. Nehru was the leader of India at that time and President Ayub was the leader of Pakistan.

*Q: The problem being the division of Kashmir, or who would get it?*

LAISE: Well, both countries were then, and still are, claiming Kashmir. I couldn't possibly begin to recreate for you all the complicated story and history of Kashmir. But as you can imagine, at the time of partition, which was a very tumultuous time, actions were taken which gave both sides a perception that they had entitlement to it. It was something that meant a great deal strategically and symbolically and every other way to each of them. It is a state the majority of which are Muslim. And under the partition arrangement, Pakistan naturally thought it would come to Pakistan. But the then ruling family had already, in accordance with the transfer of power, acted to transfer to India, and so, it became very complicated. This was for years in the Security Council of the United Nations. The United Nations had for many years a peace-keeping force up there, to have observers on the

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cease-fire line to prevent a recurrence of the hostilities that had occurred. But, I suppose, time is resolving it in favor of a division of Pakistan along the lines of occupation.

*Q: At this time, was the United States also giving military assistance to Pakistan?*

LAISE: Yes, we had then. Our association with Pakistan began in '52, when they really joined the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization]... I don't mean SEATO, I mean CENTO [Central Treaty Organization]. And they were in effect allies, a military ally to the United States from '52 onward.

To return to India, however, and our relationship during this period following the Chinese invasion, it appears to me that the year 1963 was quite important. We were seeking to build a better relationship with India, and indeed, had indicated our willingness to discuss with them and the mission that they were sending to the United States, not only the question of military assistance, but what was more important to them, to assist them in developing their own industry to supply their own military needs. That was one aspect of the relationship. Another aspect of the relationship during that period of time was the exchange of visits. And I'm particularly mindful of the fact that in 1963, June, the President of India came here on a state visit. I participated extensively in that, since I had known him from my days in UNESCO. He was the representative of India at UNESCO, a very distinguished scholar, Dr. Radha Krishnan. When he came to visit the United States in June of '63, it was an occasion for not only his talks at the presidential level, but also to do some touring of the United States, and I accompanied him on the tour that he took of the United States.

The evolving relationship with India was rudely and traumatically affected by the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963 and the subsequent death of Mr. Nehru in 1964. I recall the arrangements for the funeral was a matter which preoccupied the Department of State for a very intense and emotional period of time, because a great many countries sent very high level delegations to the funeral, and it was the

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responsibility of the department to look after those delegations and see that they were properly recognized, and that arrangements were made for them to pay their respects and to participate in the ceremonies. Each of us looked after our own particular country. That was in November of 1963. Then in the summer, I guess it was May of 1964, that Mr. Nehru died. By that time, they had also changed our ambassadors in Delhi. Ambassador Galbraith had retired to return to Harvard, and Ambassador Bowles returned to Delhi for the second time. With the new look at our relationship, which was instituted by the Johnson administration, the efforts at military assistance to India were first somewhat drawn out, and then eventually the matter came to an end.

It was during this period, early on, after President Johnson was reelected and was serving his first tour as elected president, that a reappraisal of our relationship with India and Pakistan was undertaken. In the process of that, although President Johnson had agreed to state visits from the new President of India, Mr. Shastri, and a visit from the President of Pakistan, President Ayub, whom we knew and liked, he reconsidered the matter at a time that was very, very close to President Ayub's state visit. And he, in reconsidering it, had led to a very abrupt proposal, abrupt decision, I should say, to postpone his visit and to postpone the visit of the President of India.

This had somewhat serious consequences for our relationship because it was not understood, and no amount of explanation on the part of the department or ambassadors could make it understood at the other end. It had domestic repercussions, particularly in Pakistan, where President Ayub was under criticism anyway. The dynamics of our reviewing our relationship, as evidenced by postponement of a visit in each case, and in the case of Pakistan also postponing the AID consortium, led to an estrangement. First of all, it led to pressures being generated in Pakistan that created something of an estrangement between us, and reduced our ability to reason with them. It was at that point that the pressures began to rise within Pakistan to try other means of dealing with their problems with India.

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I don't really want to get into the whole question of India-Pakistan relations, because I don't think it's of interest to this. The only reason I'm dwelling on this is that it is indicative of the kind of problems that one was dealing with as director of South Asian Affairs. I would simply say that there were numerous border disputes between India and Pakistan and Pakistan had successfully raised one of them to the point where Britain and America had strongly supported a mediation process.

Pakistan, I think, felt that a move in Kashmir would lead to a similar beneficial result from their point of view, and get us involved again. The result was quite different, however, in the case of Kashmir than in the case of the Rann of Kutch. In the case of Kashmir, India chose to respond at a place of its choosing, rather than to meet Pakistan in the area of dispute. This led to a full-fledged war, in which, then, the United States had to move immediately to try to bring it to a close. The way in which the two instruments were used in order to exert this kind of pressure, were, one, we immediately stopped all economic and military assistance to India and Pakistan, and we also moved very quickly in the United Nations to try to bring the United Nations into action to stop the dispute.

Now it's very interesting that in this case, it so happened that it was equally in the Russian interest to stop the dispute. And so both the United States and the Soviet Union, in effect, were collaborating in the Security Council to bring the war to a close. But all I wish to emphasize here is that, while in subsequent matters of this sort in the department it's now customary to establish a task force in the operations center, at that time the division was sufficiently staffed and on top of the situation that it was not considered necessary to establish a special task force. In fact, the division handled the whole crisis. It involved, as I say, diplomacy with the British. It involved diplomacy with India, Pakistan, with the United Nations delegation, as well as obviously trying to coordinate the responses and keep informed all the interested agencies in Washington and particularly, through inter-departmental committees, the Departments of Defense, Treasury, State, and the White



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House NSC [National Security Council] staff. So it was a very, very active period while I was in South Asian Affairs.

When the war came to a close, then President Ayub did pay a state visit to Washington, in December 1965. Unfortunately, the prime minister of India during that period of time, Mr. Shastri, died and was not able to make the postponed trip to visit President Johnson. Instead, Mrs. Gandhi, who was elected prime minister, who followed Mr. Shastri, was the one who made a state visit here in early '66. Before that visit occurred, however, I had participated in a trip that Vice-President Humphrey took to India and Pakistan to discuss with both President Ayub and Mrs. Gandhi the whole question of a resumption of our aid relationship. It was on the heels of that, then, that Mrs. Gandhi came to the United States on a state visit.

In other words, during the period of time that I was director of South Asian Affairs, there were three very significant funerals that we were involved in, the funerals of President Kennedy and Prime Minister Nehru and Mr. Shastri. There was an invasion of India by China. There was a war between India and Pakistan. Then there were all the more normal events that occur in our diplomatic relationships with those countries.

*Q: Good heavens! I suppose normal office hours go out the window at a time like that, don't they?*

LAISE: No, there's nothing normal about it.

*Q: Constantly rearranging your social life, I'm sure.*

LAISE: There was no social life.

*Q: How did you move up to the office of director? Is that the normal procedure in the State Department, to move someone up when. . .*

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LAISE: Well, it's not automatic. It's much more customary, perhaps, in the Civil Service. But as far as the Foreign Service is concerned, it is not, it happens at times and it does not happen at other times. It isn't necessarily any reflection on the individual that it doesn't happen, because the necessity for overseas staffing very often pulls people away at a time when they might advance. But I suppose one can conclude that it did evidence some degree of confidence.

*Q: Why, yes, I would say so. And also, I see that you were promoted again in 1964, to class one, which is certainly high, and consul general. And in '65, you won the Federal Women's Award. Was that for your work as the director of the office of South Asian Affairs?*

LAISE: Both the promotion and the award, I think, were recognition of an entire career, not just for the last job. I might say that I have a picture of that promotion, because on the occasion of the promotion to class one, it was with Kay Bracken and Margaret Tibbetts. Tibby preceded me in her appointment as ambassador, as you know. The three of us, though, were promoted to class one at the same time, and we were invited by President Johnson to come over and visit with him in the White House. It was timed, I think, to try to reduce the furor that had been created by the cartoon that Herblock had done of the President pulling the dog's ears, do you remember that? (Q: Yes indeed.) I suppose he hoped maybe his attention to the women would take that off the front page, but it didn't. No, I'm afraid the Washington press is not very much interested in the promotion of career women in the Foreign Service. But I do have a picture in my study in Vermont of that occasion, which was a very nice one.

*Q: Well, I do know that that's getting up there pretty quickly. Three years between two and one is certainly above average, shall we say? (Pause) And then it seems to be a natural progression that you became an ambassador in September of '66.*

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LAISE: Following Mrs. Gandhi's visit in the spring of 1966, I began to get indications from the White House that they thought that since the President was interested in appointing more women ambassadors, I ought to be considered for one such post. They asked if I had any views on the subject. My response was that I thought I was being very well used where I was. But the position in Nepal very shortly became available, and I think there was an interest in the White House in having me considered for that post. But at that particular juncture I was out in Asia on a tour of the area, and nothing was broached to me on the subject.

When I got back in the summer again the question was raised, and I believe, with the department. It rather placed us all in something of a predicament because I think my superiors in the department had felt about the same way that I did—that in terms of my training and particular responsibilities at that juncture and the problems in the area it was more important to remain where I was, and that the post that was being suggested was not of such a priority concern that I should be transferred into it. However, I made it clear to all concerned that if the president, for whatever reasons, wanted me to go to Nepal, I would be delighted to do so. Naturally the president's wish prevailed, and this resulted in my going to Nepal. And I've never regretted it.

*Q: So it was really President Johnson then who selected you for this?*

LAISE: Yes. My perception is that the initiative for it came from the White House staff, and because I had been handling several state visits and had had various interactions with the White House and with the president, it came about. I would not say necessarily because I as an individual was so important for that job as it was what I as a woman would give. My appointment as a woman to a visible position was important to the President.

*Q: Yes, because this is the time of the beginning of all the ferment for women's rights and civil rights. (LAISE: Yes.) How did you learn of your nomination? How does one learn of a thing like that? Is it a phone call you get or . . .*

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LAISE: Well, to tell you the truth, I've forgotten. It was not a phone call from the president, as it is today. I really can't remember how I learned of it, but the decision had been made that the name would go forward to the Senate.

*Q: Am I correct in thinking that your predecessor was leaving, and therefore the post was being made available?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: I see. How did you prepare yourself for the Senate hearings?*

LAISE: First of all, since Nepal was in the division over which I had presided for a number of years . . .

*Q: You didn't have to do too much, did you?*

LAISE: It wasn't all that strange to me, and I had visited there in the spring of '66, so I had followed enough of these developments fairly closely, was familiar with it. My preparation primarily was to review the information and data in connection with all the programs involved so that I had the facts and figures at my fingertips.

It served me in very good stead, I might say, because one event occurred which gave me considerable satisfaction. I was queried by Senator Fulbright, rather vigorously, I might tell you, on the basis of a new book that had been written about how so much aid had been poured into Nepal, [and] it was being somewhat inefficiently used. He quoted some figures about the nature of our aid to Nepal, and then he cited some PL 480 figures, and fortunately, that was one of the things that I had reviewed very carefully before I had gone up, and was able to point out that the figures he was citing was a misreading of the chart. He was under the impression we were giving PL 480 grain to Nepal. At that point, Nepal was an exporting country, not an importing country. What was going to Nepal in the way of

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aid was blocked rupees from the India PL 480 account, but we were not shipping grain to Nepal.

The question that the Senator asked was, "Why in the world were we sending grain all the way around the world to a little country like that? Wasn't there a more efficient way of doing it?" Of course, the question was not even relevant, because we weren't sending any grain. That I knew, of course, but where the confusion arose, I was able to explain, because I had gone over this same chart that apparently his staff had presented to him. But the senator was very gracious and very nice indeed, and they all talked about how they'd come to visit me in Nepal. Senator Aiken has said many times since then, since we're neighbors in Vermont, that, alas, Ellsworth beat them to it. (CCL and AMM laugh together). So they never came to Nepal.

*Q: Were you received by the President after you became . . .*

LAISE: Yes, I was. I have a very nice picture of that occasion.

*Q: What sort of an occasion do they make of that? Did you meet in the Oval Office?*

LAISE: No, at the time I went, a group of us went, recent appointees, we met with the president in one of the, let me see, in which room? One of the drawing rooms in the White House.

*Q: Oh, I see. It was really a social occasion.*

LAISE: It was more a social occasion than anything.

*Q: Was Mrs. Johnson there, or was this . . .*

LAISE: No, no, just the President.

*Q: It must be quite a . . .*

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LAISE: (Voices overlap) Well, it was very nice indeed. I can show you the picture that I have hanging.

*Q: I would love to see it. I suppose the secretary of state receives all of the people going out, and talks to them then.*

LAISE: Actually, the big occasion normally is the swearing-in ceremony. In my case, the swearing-in was on the eighth floor, but the vice president came and the secretary was there.

*Q: Did you have a great many guests?*

LAISE: Yes, I think so.

*Q: You have carte blanche, don't you, to have as many as you want?*

LAISE: Yes, there were quite a few there.

*Q: Very, very nice. When you left for your post, did anyone from the host government come to see you off?*

LAISE: Yes. Yes, the embassy. . . I'm perfectly certain they do. I can't specifically remember. I went early to my post. I did not go directly; I spent some time in India. In fact, I had Thanksgiving in India with the Bowleses. Then I went on to Calcutta to visit a consul general there; we were friends. And so it was both a kind of briefing experience as well as renewing personal friendships. Then I went on from Calcutta to Kathmandu.

*Q: This was all by plane or did you have to take trains?*

LAISE: No, in those days, the military attach# had a plane.

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*Q: Oh, of course. Could you tell us how the Nepalese reacted to having a woman ambassador?*

LAISE: (Pause) Interestingly enough, the only time I got that question was in the United States. So I had much less of a mention of this in Kathmandu. I guess my perception, or assessment of the Nepalese reaction adds up to the fact that so long as the representative of the United States is competent, understands their problems, and is able to interpret it with results from Washington, they will give a cordial reception to that representative regardless of sex. I think the key factor is that they respect authority, and the United States is very important to them. And so long as the United States representative is one who is a person having the qualifications I mentioned, I think the question of sex doesn't enter in.

*Q: Do you recall anything special about your first day? Were there any anecdotes or anything unexpected that happened?*

LAISE: Well, it was . . . (Chuckles) Yes, there were unusual aspects. First of all, I was flown in on the attach#s plane, military plane. In those days, our attach#s in Delhi were also accredited to Kathmandu, and in those days also, the attach# had an airplane at his disposal, one of the attach#s. Therefore, I was flown up to Nepal in an American military plane. It was, I believe, a DC3. We got over the field and started to land, and then had to pull out of our descent and circle again because there were cows or sheep on the runway and they had to clear them off so that we could get in. So then we came in. I was met at the airport by somebody from the protocol office and by the then-charg#, who was Harry Barnes, and escorted to the residence. I suppose the most significant factor about that day was my having to tell Harry Barnes that I planned to be married within a month, in Kathmandu at the residence, to Ellsworth Bunker. I had to get his advice on how to organize it there in a way that it would not become public knowledge until the day of the event.

*Q: That must have been a slight bombshell for Harry Barnes.*

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LAISE: Well, he says it was, but he likes a challenge and he rose to the challenge very well.

*Q: How soon did you present your credentials?*

LAISE: Within two days. In fact, I stayed in India until very near the time when I would present my credentials, simply in order not to be in limbo in Kathmandu. So I presented my credentials on December 5, 1966.

*Q: Could you tell us something about the ceremony?*

LAISE: Well, you know that I was only the second resident ambassador to Kathmandu. My predecessor and all of the other former ambassadors who were accredited from India had presented their credentials in quite a colorful and elaborate ceremony, being in horse-drawn carriages, taken to the city palace, with a morning coat, and a good deal of formality. By the time I had arrived in Kathmandu, however, the drill for presenting credentials had changed somewhat. The ceremonies at the city palace had ceased, the palace of the king had been dismantled and was being reconstructed in the form of a much more modern palace, so that the king was both living and working in what amounted to bungalows on the royal grounds. Therefore, appropriately, the ceremony was very simple.

One was expected to be in somewhat formal attire, though I do not believe that men wore morning coats then, although I can't remember entirely. But in any event, it was not altogether relevant for my situation, and I really had to create my own outfit because there was no precedent there nor very much to go by anywhere else. So I followed a tradition which has always stood me in good stead in any function in Kathmandu; it was to wear what you would wear under similar circumstance in the British court. In this case, it seemed appropriate to wear the kind of outfit that one would wear to a British garden party. So I wore a sort of beige and gold brocade dress and coat and hat to match. I took with me the country team, that was the custom, to meet and, I think, bow and shake hands



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with His Majesty, to have a few minutes of conversation, to present the withdrawal of the credentials of my predecessor and to present my own credentials. It was all a matter of some degree of formality. Then I presented to His Majesty each member of the country team, after which we withdrew and the ceremony was over, and it was very brief.

I did, at that time, indicate to His Majesty that I was bearing a letter from President Johnson, in response to a letter His Majesty had sent, and I would welcome the opportunity of an audience to have a substantive discussion at his earliest convenience. It turned out that His Majesty chose to grant that audience on Christmas day. I presented the letter explaining the background of the letter. It related to some extent to my mission, and it, in effect, constituted an agenda, shall we say, for my tenure there. Then at the end of our conversation on Christmas Day, I informed His Majesty that I would be getting married to Ellsworth Bunker on the 3rd of January. He seemed thunderstruck at the idea, and I do not know to this day what his initial reaction was, but in the event, he seemed very pleased and the Nepalese seemed to take it as a proper acknowledgment of their importance that, in effect, there were two American ambassadors resident in Kathmandu.

*Q: What was the state of relations between the United States and Nepal at the time?*

LAISE: (Pause) Nepal and the United States generally have enjoyed a cordial relationship. We were one of the early countries to establish a mission in Nepal. You see, prior to establishing a resident mission in Nepal, we did have a very large AID mission. We were giving a considerable amount of aid to Nepal, and helping in its economic development. I think Ambassador Bowles, in his first incarnation in India in 1952, I believe it was, signed the first agreement. I know that when my husband was also accredited in Nepal, a number of important projects were agreed upon in helping to build the transportation system of Nepal, a certain amount of infrastructure, as well as assistance in the field of health, education, and agriculture; those were the major areas in which we were functioning.

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There was a problem in our relationship at the time I arrived, and that was the basis of the exchange of letters between the king and President Johnson. It grew out of the fact, I believe, of several things. One was, at the time of the Tibetan uprising and the escape of the Dalai Lama, the CIA and the Indian government were cooperating in rendering assistance to the Khamba [tribesmen]. Some of the Khambas took refuge in northern Nepal, an area called Mustang, and were using that as a base of operations against Tibet, and Nepal felt that it threatened their nonaligned position and they were basically very uncomfortable with this. The fallout from that was, I believe, one of the causes of concern between the king and the United States.

The other was the fact that the AID mission had been there for some time as the major U.S. presence and was relatively unsupervised. I think there was a perception on the part of the ruling Nepalese-trained personnel, and I might say, trained with our assistance and the Indian assistance, that our mission was taking a rather proprietary air about the functions and activities in which they were engaged, and were forgetting to some extent that their role was advisers only. I sensed that the King and the Nepalese bureaucracy were seeking to, as it were, gain control of their own situation. Now I indicate that, I hazard the guess, that these were the two problems, because in the letter that was sent from the King of Nepal to the United States, there were no specifics mentioned. Their complaint was stated only in the most general terms of our interference in their internal affairs. It was therefore my task to assure them that the United States did not wish to interfere in their internal affairs, that our role was primarily that of a partner in their development. Indeed, our objective was to help develop self-reliance and self-sufficiency, and that to assure His Majesty that, should he have any complaints on this score, I was empowered to try to work out a harmonious relationship.

From that point on, I think it's fair to say that the confidence between us grew, and I think the way in which we handled ourselves and related to the Nepalese problems, and their own efforts to stand on their own feet, resulted in what I consider a healthy relationship.

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*Q: Yes, I know that your time there was certainly a high-watermark in the relationship. The letter that you carried, was that drafted at the State Department or at the White House?*

LAISE: Well, I think this was drafted at the department. But with somebody like Bob Komer at the White House, you can be sure that there was an input from the White House.

*Q: You say that Harry Barnes was there, so you had no say in selecting him. He had been the DCM, had he?*

LAISE: He had been the DCM and was ready to leave, and I asked him to defer his departure to have a certain degree of continuity. He left in the summer, a period of transfers, and his successor arrived during the summer.

*Q: I see, and you did select the successor?*

LAISE: I selected all the subsequent successors during my tenure, yes.

*Q: Were they people you knew first-hand, or did you do it from a list that the department sent you?*

LAISE: Well, it was a matter of negotiation, I mean, of the people who were qualified and whose tour of duty somewhere else permitted their consideration, combined with my own knowledge of the individual. So that I did select people that I knew. I had not known Harry Barnes up to that point.

*Q: Were there no women on the lists?*

LAISE: No, no.

*Q: That, you suppose, was because there were very few senior women in the Service?*

LAISE: At that time.

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*Q: At that time, yes. Now, did you spell out your DCM's role to him, or was it something that just evolved?*

LAISE: No, I have a very, I think, clear idea of what relationship between an ambassador and DCM ought to be and I don't think it's peculiar to me, I think it's standard, an idea of one who is alter ego of the ambassador and who is the focal point for coordinating the operations of the mission. In this case, there was a very large development program, an AID mission, at the time I was there. Therefore, the role, that particular role was not an insignificant one. But my style has always been an open one of including a country team in the operations of the mission and giving everyone a role in, not only fulfilling his own mission, but trying to see the larger role of the United States and relate his particular function to the larger role of the United States.

*Q: So you work along collegial lines rather than authoritarian.*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Well, regarding the staff that you inherited, were there any problems of morale or incompetence or alcoholism, or family difficulties, or anything like that?*

LAISE: Not that I'm aware of. I think that, again, this is an area which in all probability, the routine matters were disposed of by the DCM. Any quite serious problems were naturally brought to my attention. On the whole, the morale and esprit in Kathmandu was, it seemed to me, always high. I attributed it as much as anything to the fact that to a certain extent the post was a self-selecting one. I mean, people came there who sought what it had to offer, were aware that there was a certain amount of isolation but equally a certain amount of challenge and a style of life that really harked back to American rural experience. We had people come who enjoy that kind of lifestyle and were resourceful in self-entertainment. And in fact, the Peace Corps, I think, was noted for having people wanting to come back again and again.

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*Q: Is it rated a hardship post because of the isolation?*

LAISE: Yes, yes. But it has other factors that don't make it as much of a hardship post as others that are less isolated, because its weather is much more agreeable than India; it's in the temperate zone. I think probably the most difficult problem for families is the one of sanitation and hygiene . . . and the gastro-intestinal diseases that are so prevalent.

*Q: How big was the mission? You mentioned a sizable AID program. How many Americans?*

LAISE: I think there were about a hundred Americans when I went there, employees.

*Q: How many locals do you think you had, roughly?*

LAISE: Oh, heavens, I haven't any idea. I'd have to look it up, but certainly several hundred.

*Q: Is that so? How often did you have staff and country team meetings?*

LAISE: I think it was certainly once a week.

*Q: And everyone gave opinions and ideas and so forth?*

LAISE: Yes, there was a real genuine exchange. Back to the question of problems, it was not a problem with the staff, but I suppose the major problem with Americans at that time was the hippies who were making their way to Kathmandu. At the time I was there Kathmandu was the place to be on the hippie circuit. So that there was a fairly active consular office, shall we say. But I can also say that there were very few times in which I got involved, because I think we had worked out a good relationship with the government of Nepal, the government . . .

*Q: Did you have many problems with destitute Americans stranded in Nepal?*

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LAISE: No, they didn't present much of a problem for us because, since America has a large ocean on each side, a certain amount of affluence is necessary before a citizen can leave the country. They have to have plane fare. However, the continental embassies have a great many problems because people from Europe could manage to bum or thumb rides and land up there, and totally without any resources at all.

*Q: Had the drug problem started then? (LAISE: Yes.) They had. Are Nepalese jails notoriously bad, the way they are in South America?*

LAISE: Well, I don't know how they are in South America. I have not been in one, but I know that given the standard of living, they're not very comfortable. But on the other hand, as I indicated earlier, the hazards are not as great there as they were in Turkey, where the punishment for drug use is so severe, in both Turkey and Afghanistan.

*Q: Yes, so that people were not retained in jail? (LAISE: No.) How long was it, Ambassador, before you felt at home, settled in, both in the residence and at work?*

LAISE: Well, first of all, I had visited Kathmandu before, in my previous capacity. I was extremely fortunate that the previous ambassador and his wife had built a very comfortable residence. The ambassador's wife had trained a very competent group of staff. And while I had supposed that I might have to have some kind of special help in the form of a housekeeper to run the house, it did not, in fact, turn out to be necessary, because my predecessors had done such a fine job of training the Nepalese staff, that with a minimum of guidance from me, they were thoroughly competent to run the house.

*Q: Oh, that was fortunate! Would you like to tell us how you were able to keep your marriage from the press as well as you did? I know it sort of was a bombshell at the time it was announced.*

LAISE: Well, I think it wasn't any great struggle. We didn't say anything about it, obviously, before I left Washington. Ellsworth had every good reason to come to that part of the world

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because his son was with the Ford Foundation in India, and so he spent Christmas there. As a former ambassador to Kathmandu, it was not unnatural that he would pay a visit to Nepal. And so I sent out invitations to the reception, simply as a reception honoring him, a former ambassador. The press in Kathmandu is not as inquisitive as the press in Washington. I think probably the first inkling that anybody got of something happening was that President Johnson sent his congratulatory message through the international wire service. He sent it a day ahead of time, because originally we had planned to be married on the second of January. But since New Year's Day fell on Sunday, the second turned out to be a holiday, and we didn't want to ruin anybody's holiday. So we postponed it to the third, but the White House didn't know it, so the telegram came a bit early. I think the reporters are accustomed to being alert to what comes in over the wire services, and that was the first inkling they had that something was up, but that turned out to be the day of the wedding so it was not very much ahead of time. So it still caught everybody pretty much by surprise, and the way we announced it was at the reception; we read the telegram from the President of the United States. That was the announcement.

*Q: I see. Was the actual ceremony held at the embassy?*

LAISE: At the residence. Fortunately, it was held at the residence. I say fortunately; I didn't know it at the time, because obviously the residence is American soil. I only discovered later when I allowed a daughter of a friend, a colleague of mine, who was in the Peace Corps to marry another Peace Corps volunteer in the residence. In connection with her wedding announcement, she had dug up some of the Nepalese laws, and I had found out that because of the age difference between me and Ellsworth, our marriage would have been illegal on Nepalese soil.

*Q: Oh, is that so? Who performed the ceremony? Did you bring in your own minister or judge?*

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LAISE: That was part of the genius of Harry Barnes. He managed to have his father-in-law there for Christmas. He was the Reverend Norman Sibley, a retired Presbyterian minister from New York City. So he performed the ceremony.

*Q: Then of course, the consul signed all of the . . .*

LAISE: Harry Barnes signed all the documents, yes.

*Q: Did you go off on a trip at that time, or did you just stay at home?*

LAISE: Oh no, he arranged our honeymoon for us. (Chuckles)

*Q: He even did that!* LAISE: Yes. We went to Tiger Tops, which is a resort in the Terai, in the jungle. It was a very pleasant place and very much a tourist attraction these days in Nepal. You can see the tigers and ride elephants. We spent a number of days there. They didn't have many visitors at that point. The only other one was one of the royal family. Then we went on to visit some of the Peace Corps. So our honeymoon was spent visiting the Peace Corps in some rather primitive circumstances. I must say Ellsworth was extremely game and a good sport about it all.

*Q: So ambassadors really never get time off, do they? (Both chuckle) Could you tell us something about your relationship with the king? Did you see him often?*

LAISE: Well, he was the head of state. Since my predecessors were there, he had grown into the job—I say grown into the job, because the kings of Nepal did not rule Nepal for a hundred years. The ruler, in effect, was the prime minister, who was of another family altogether, and they were the hereditary rulers of Nepal for a hundred years. In 1950-51, that particular R#n# family, who were the traditional prime ministers, were overthrown by an effort on the part of the Nepali Congress Party to move Nepal from an authoritarian form of government toward a constitutional democracy built on a British model. The Nepali Congress Party, with the assistance of the Indians, did bring about restoration of the



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king of Nepal to the throne. And the king then moved in the direction of a parliamentary democracy, and they actually had an election, a parliamentary election, and the election of a prime minister in the early sixties.

But then the king who then came to the throne (1956 actually was the coronation of the second king to actually rule in recent times) was the one who carried through on the elections. I think he had anticipated that there would be a much greater fragmentation and split in the voting, and he would have the balance of power, when in fact, it did not work out that way, and the prime minister had a fairly solid support.

I think it was the perception of the king of Nepal that this form of government, which he felt was too dependent on support from India, was threatening to his position and would perhaps deny Nepal the total independence that he sought for Nepal. He, in effect, set aside the result of the election and took power directly himself, and instituted subsequently a form of government which he said was more in line with Nepal's traditions of the panchayat system, in which there were direct elections at the village level but indirect elections to the legislature, and the prime minister was appointed by the king.

There'd been liberalization efforts made through the years in that system, but it's still very much a system where the power lies with the king. Now, I mention all this because it's indicative of the fact that there was a trend prior to my time, a trend away from a constitutional parliamentary democracy toward a more centralization of power in the king. That was accompanied internationally by the king's effort to position Nepal in an entirely neutral position as between their neighbors, India and China, as well as the rest of the world. And in order to preserve that posture of neutrality in spirit as well as in form, the king always balanced his appointments and his engagements to seek to avoid being a captive of any one group.

Therefore, any American ambassador seeking to have a relationship with the king always had to keep that in mind. Therefore, I always observed the formalities. Any problems that

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we had between us on issues, whether voting at the United Nations or issues of a volatile nature—which were very few, I must say, and related primarily to our economic assistance program—I would first try to sort out with the government. It was only when I could not get satisfaction from the government that I would seek an audience with the king, and I would assure that the king was fully briefed on what the problems were, through his government, before I sought an audience. That was on the formal side.

Of course, there were always many functions of a social nature in which one would encounter Their Majesties. Because every time a donor country or the U.N. or a multilateral agency would complete a project, there was always some kind of a ceremony connected with the inauguration of the project, and very often it would involve—if it were a major project—it would involve the royal family, and all the diplomatic corps were invited. Also we had many visitors, state visitors from countries around the world, and functions were given for them and the diplomatic corps were always invited. So there was a good deal of social interaction of that nature, where one had a chance to visit with the royal family. Then it was also the custom of Their Majesties to accept private engagements that were unpublicized for various functions at various embassies. Through that manner, it was possible to develop more of a personal relationship. And so, let's put it this way, in a long answer to your first question, it was a good relationship developed over a period of time in the context of the way Nepalese do business.

*Q: I see. Do they have a national costume that the king wore? Was he in a uniform of some sort?*

LAISE: Yes, they have a national dress, which is the traditional Nepalese outfit for men, of a sort of tight pants and a tunic-type blouse, and then they always wear a black Western coat over it, and a Nepali hat.

*Q: Could you describe the sort of relationships you developed with other members of the cabinet, or other host government officials and their wives?*

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LAISE: Kathmandu is a relatively small community of officialdom; there's a relatively small diplomatic corps. I think there were only fourteen missions there when I was there. The basis for developing relations with the host country officials in a country which is situated as Nepal is—and very cognizant of the importance of maintaining its nonalignment and its posture of neutrality—the development of relationship has a degree of formality to it, because it is important that the officialdom be perceived to be nonaligned in their relationships as well as having a nonaligned policy. The government was quite strict about restraining official relationships because they were aware that the resources available to the diplomats could be very seductive to officials in a country such as Nepal. The United States certainly wanted to contribute to the government's independence and its perception of the importance of their officials not being corrupted by the largess of foreign governments, so we ourselves cooperated with this effort. Therefore, the kind of relationship that we had enjoyed when we had only an AID mission and we were the only major country there besides India, had changed over the years.

But even so, I think it's important to say that since the United States did play such a large role and had a large mission in the economic development effort, there were professional relations between U.S. representatives there in the AID mission and their counterparts throughout the ministries. I, as an ambassador, attended many of the functions that were held to honor trainees in education, in agriculture, and in health. We had visitors constantly from Washington who wanted to meet their counterparts. And all of that was part of the perceived valid relationship between Nepalese and our government. Because we had so much interaction of this nature and could build a social occasion around it, it meant that either I was visiting projects of ours where I would see the operation of our efforts in cooperation with the Nepalese on the job, or in Kathmandu, I would have the occasion to invite these people to the residence or to attend the function at the AID mission. And so, through the fact of our very extensive involvement in the economic development, there was no difficulty in getting acquainted with all the concerned officials, both cabinet officials, cabinet secretaries, and secretaries of the departments.

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When you combine all the things that we were doing bilaterally with the fact that there were so many functions celebrating economic development projects of other missions, the UN organizations, there was the necessity always of us, of the United States having to coordinate our efforts with those of the UN organizations, since there was a consortium established under the [World] Bank, of foreign aid to Nepal. Both the UN and the UN agencies were always focusing on coordination of efforts. There was a lot of interaction coming about because of that. So that I guess I would say in summary that the economic development aspect of the embassy's mission was what preoccupied us mostly and afforded the opportunity for interaction with all levels of government.

*Q: Is there a business class in Nepal?*

LAISE: At the time I was there it was very limited.

*Q: Were they working on educational problems, and health, building hospitals with the help of the U.N. and the U.S.? Was that part of the aid to Nepal?*

LAISE: I think I indicated to you before that the American assistance was in the field of education, agriculture, and health. We also in prior years gave a lot of infrastructure. We built some roads and contributed some planes and even some auxiliary military assistance, but during my tenure the focus was almost entirely on agriculture, health, and education. What this meant was training. It did mean laboratory schools, special training facilities, curriculum development, teacher training. We assisted the Nepalese in building a number of important institutions, not just in Kathmandu. In the health field we were working with the WHO in eliminating—I guess we eliminated malaria from Nepal.

In the agriculture field we were seeking to help develop improved methods for increasing crop production. Indeed, the United States was instrumental in working with the Nepalese to assure that. For example, Kathmandu, at one time, was just a one-crop area of rice, and our efforts were instrumental in introducing wheat and improved wheat seeds so

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that Kathmandu was transformed from a deficit food area to a surplus area for producing food. Now, a great impetus of our efforts was contributing to not only improved seeds and methods of development, but the organizational structure needed to bring it about, the cooperatives and the agricultural credit banks, and all of the infrastructure necessary to increase agricultural productivity; and for women, it included home economics and that sort of thing.

*Q: Did you send people to the U.S., or was the training done on the spot?*

LAISE: There was training on the spot—certain types of training in the U.S. For quite a number of years our AID project to Nepal [used] our blocked rupees in India, garnered from the PL 480 program to India. A great deal of it was used for training in India. It made a lot more sense because the methodology, the environment, and indeed the whole approach was much more geared to their way of doing things than it would have been in the United States. However, when it came to more advanced training in some of the areas, they did come to the United States.

*Q: Would you discuss the role of women at the time you were in Nepal?*

LAISE: Well, I indicated to you that when the King dismissed the prime minister and the government, he set about developing a new system, which he called the panchayat system, which he felt was more relevant to tradition in Nepal. He sought to construct a political system that would enlarge the participation of various segments of Nepal's society through a system that he felt would be less divisive than the political party system as we know it. What the panchayat system provided was that there would be representation in the legislatures, both the local and the national legislature, not along party lines but along class lines and group interest lines. I've forgotten now, but there were about five groups; one certainly was the educated group, one was the peasant group, and one was the women's organization. And my recollection is that class organizations were supposed to form a part of the political life of Nepal and be the basis of special representation in the

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legislatures to assure wide participation and yet to assure the clustering of interest, not on party lines, but along lines [of] self-interest defined according to class.

Of the five class organizations, the women's organization proved to be the most active and successful, because there were a group of women leaders in Kathmandu who came to prominence through this process, who were very, very active and very vocal. I think that there was no question that my appointment to Nepal was seen by them as a help to their effort to get recognition. When His Majesty first came to one of these private dinners that we had for him and the queen a few weeks after our marriage, he spent a fair amount of time explaining and trying to justify the changes he'd made in the constitution, because he was very much criticized, of course, in the United States and in India for moving from a democratic constitution to a more authoritarian constitution.

He sought to explain to us the changes that he had made, and to show that he had a sense of humor he threw in the story—whether it was real or apocryphal, I don't know—but he said, “You know, one of the changes that my government sought to make was in our national anthem.” He said, “You know there is a phrase in our national anthem. It's the equivalent of 'all good men should come to the aid of their country.' It should be 'all good men and women.' He said that it wouldn't fit into the cadence so he changed it to “all good people”. But he said, “You know, when I proposed this, my political opponents accused me of doing this under the pressure of the new American ambassador—yielding to pressure from the American ambassador.” But he was quite remarkable in the sense of wanting to bring women out more. I know that he played quite a role in trying to involve his wife in charitable things and give leadership to child welfare activities and to the women's organization and so on. So I had the sense that he was taking a considerable amount of pleasure in providing a more active role in the panchayat system for women. They took advantage of it, there's no question.

My residence was right next door to a women's college; I think they call it a college, but it was a school actually. The president of that was a good, extremely able and also a very

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vocal woman activist and a very loyal aide of the queen. I often went there for functions. I did everything I possibly could, of course, too. Whenever invited, I was glad to participate and do whatever I could to give recognition to what they were doing. It seemed to me that in that period of time there was a very definite emergence of women from the very traditional role.

*Q: Prior to this period, women had not been educated?*

LAISE: Well, men and women hadn't been.

*Q: It was a universal thing?*

LAISE: Yes. Well, you see, before the king came to power, and the revolution in '50-51, Nepal for a hundred years had been isolated from the rest of the world and ruled as a private estate of the ruling prime ministers. There was only one school, I guess, in the country; it was there in Kathmandu. The educational system virtually did not exist. For any education, the young men had to leave and go to India prior to that time. So there was virtually very, very little education anywhere in Nepal.

*Q: How do the Nepalese treat children?*

LAISE: Oh, they're very affectionate; very permissive and affectionate with children.

*Q: Is education universal now?*

LAISE: Yes, in principle, it's universal. And the facilities have developed remarkably. Now you go out to the countryside and see the schools and the children going to school. The quality of education, of course, still leaves something to be desired. And while an effort has been made to have free and compulsory schooling at the early years, I think still it's not one hundred percent. One of the major roles that the Peace Corps has played in Nepal, and it's a fairly large Peace Corps—the number I gave to you of Americans in our mission did not include the Peace Corps; the Peace Corps numbered anywhere from a hundred

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and fifty to two hundred and fifty above that—their work has been in the field of agriculture and education and teaching English as a second language. They have played a very important role in the educational effort.

*Q: Getting back to the mission itself, where did you place the greatest emphasis? You had said it was on aid, but I mean in your overall job—on representation, reporting, or negotiation? Obviously you did all three, but where was most of your time spent?*

LAISE: (Pause) It would be very hard for me to divide it up. I don't want to use representation because representation has so much the connotation of entertainment.

*Q: I meant it in the sense of presenting your country to the people, making good contacts. I wasn't thinking of it in the narrow sense of socializing, but in the diplomatic sense.*

LAISE: Well, I think there's no question that the major part of it was spent in our economic development efforts. That really means being physically present and knowing what was going on, and negotiating, or directing negotiations, either with Washington or with the host country about the shape, the content, and the amount of money that would be devoted to these projects, and then arranging for meetings between our people and the Nepalese as a way of creating an environment in which we could achieve our objectives. But that's so intertwined I would not be able to break it out as to how much was spent on what.

*Q: What about actually running the mission? What was the quality of your staff?*

LAISE: No one really can function very successfully without the devoted and dependable performance of our local staff, and as far as the American staff is concerned, I think in all elements of our mission we had people who were dedicated and able and interested in their jobs. I suppose the one area where we could have done better was perhaps in the defense attach# side. But that's not surprising in a country where it's not all that important.



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*Q: Did Washington give you a free hand, and did they give you what you considered adequate policy guidance?*

LAISE: I think that Nepal was an ideal situation because during my time most of our funding for our economic program came from blocked rupees, and since that did not require congressional appropriation, this allowed the embassy to adjust programs to the local requirements within certain established guidelines. It was a program we were able to adapt more to the local situation than is often the case with AID programs. I have to say that we were quite content to be in a position of writing our own instructions for the most part, because I don't think Washington generally was that much concerned about Nepal; it was not central to our national interest.

*Q: No, our national interest at that time was pretty heavily on Vietnam, which leads me to the next question: Did the Vietnam War have any adverse effects on your embassy as it did in so many other embassies around the world, where people demonstrated against the American people?*

LAISE: No, Kathmandu (and Nepal) was remarkable, in that it was one area where Americans were, and as far as I know, still are, always welcome. There were no efforts on our part to violate Nepal's established position of nonalignment. I think there may have been some apprehension initially, shortly after our marriage Ellsworth went to Vietnam that it might somehow suck them in in ways they did not wish. But that was never at issue, and I think they grew to have confidence in our understanding of their situation. And indeed, it had a reverse effect, in my perception. Since Ellsworth had a U.S. military plane flying back and forth to Kathmandu—it was not a jet, it was an old type plane—and there was room for about thirty-odd people that he could bring up from Vietnam, it became a R & R place for some of our staff in Vietnam, and the Nepalese were more than happy to help them spend their money, and improve their foreign exchange position.

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That was on the economic side, and on the more serious side of it, I got the distinct impression that since it was clear that we were trustworthy and we were not going to try to use them in any way in relation to Vietnam, or in a way that would violate their nonalignment, they were rather happy to have the United States Air Force know their geography because, in the wake of developments elsewhere in the world where small countries had been threatened by their neighbors, they were glad to have the United States well informed about the terrain and where they were in the event of need.

*Q: I can see why they would, yes. What about the U.S. press? Did they come to Nepal often?*

LAISE: We had an American stringer there, who had been there for years, who was a stringer for Reuters, Elizabeth Hawley. We sought to get an American wire service in there, but again, in accordance with their nonaligned posture, I think they decided they preferred to have European wire services. We really didn't have any resident American service represented there, as I recall. We did have visits from time to time from the resident correspondents of the New York Times and other papers in Delhi, or even some of the ones from Hong Kong or wherever who would come to Kathmandu and to report, the Christian Science Monitor, and so on. And of course, they would check in with me.

*Q: What about the local press, such as it was?*

LAISE: Well, they have quite an extensive vernacular press. There was one major English language daily, the English version of the Nepali version of a major newspaper. We were in constant touch with the local press. USIA has an office there and we had regular sessions with them, briefing sessions, and I had regular sessions with them. The more active, I suppose, was the Indian press representative.

*Q: Did they often report on you when you would open schools or whatever you did as you went around the country?*

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LAISE: Oh yes, they did, yes.

*Q: In a very positive way—never critical, I mean?*

LAISE: No. No, no. The press is fairly well directed from the government. The Indian press could become mischievous. Our greatest problem always has been to assure that—and I felt it was very important—that the Indian representatives there as well as the Indian press fully understood what we were doing there and that we were not seeking to undermine their interests there; that we were friends and not working at cross-purposes. But, while our position in relation to the Indians was an understood one as far as the Indians were concerned, at the time that we altered our relations with China in 1971, the Indians tended to become much more worried about what we were doing in Nepal. They knew as long as we had the anti-Communist posture of the fifties and the sixties, that we were not a problem to them vis-a-vis China, in Nepal.

*Q: When the Nepalese press wrote about you, was it as the ambassador or as a woman?*

LAISE: No, as the ambassador.

*Q: You didn't get a lot of these frivolous questions?*

LAISE: Never. Well, I got it here in the United States, but not in Nepal. It never, never came up.

*Q: You must have had a pretty heavy entertainment schedule, didn't you, with going to official things and giving official things?*

LAISE: (Pause) Not as heavy as it might sound compared to what you might get in an embassy in a large country. Yes, there was a fair amount of attendance at functions and giving of functions during the course of the year. But, you know, let's keep in mind that

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this was a very small country and a very small diplomatic corps, and functions are much simpler in those countries.

*Q: What sort of entertainment do they prefer? Did you give dinners or was it mainly the reception type?*

LAISE: Well, certainly there were many receptions in connection with the ceremonies. I myself am not very enthusiastic about receptions and so my own functions, I sought to make tea, lunch, dinner, or even morning coffees. You see, the Nepalese working day begins at about ten until about five. They usually take their lunch or don't have any lunch. They have traditionally two meals a day, a late breakfast—it doesn't mean they don't get up early. They do get up early and then they have breakfast and go to work and then have an early dinner when they get home after work. So while officials would come to lunch you can understand that, given the fact that that's their work day, tea is a very, very important form of socializing in a country such as Nepal, or India too.

*Q: Is that at the usual tea hour, of late afternoon?*

LAISE: Yes. Another form of entertainment is very much of a treat given the fact that there were no Western movies there whatsoever. We were on the Army circuit of films. American films were always very popular, so that one of the privileges we had was to use our films as a form of representation.

*Q: Yes, it seems to be a successful function in any country. Did you take any particular steps to make certain that your young officers got the proper training?*

LAISE: Well, because we had had a large AID mission there, orientation programs in Nepal were established well before I got there for whole families. And it was fairly important in a country such as that to have orientation for both the wives and husbands. The more functional training is more on-the-job training and since it's a small mission, you could use it. That's one of the reasons why I had an open collegial style. It helps in training

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the young officers. We always rotated the junior officers among the various functions, consular, economic, political, staff aide, and so on.

*Q: And you kept close touch with their progress, I suppose. What about efficiency reports, did you write many of them, or just the DCM's? Did you review them?*

LAISE: I had to write them on all the country team, then I reviewed them on a great many.

*Q: Did you have inspectors come through? How did they treat your mission?*

LAISE: Very well. We had both AID and state inspectors.

*Q: What's your own opinion of your AID mission? How well did it function? Was it superior, average, inferior, or wouldn't you care to categorize it?*

LAISE: (Pause) Well, I'm aware of the differing views that exist about AID missions. I guess I felt that Nepal was the kind of country where our AID and Peace Corps missions had a role. It was not substituting for what people of a country could do for themselves. The fact of the matter is that they did not at that stage have enough trained people to undertake the development tasks that were urgently needed, and needed the injection of a catalyst such as we provided. I'm sure that within the mission, there were varying qualities of people. That's to be expected in any institution. Certainly the leadership during the period of time that I was there, the top leadership, were conceptually competent and gave what seemed to me the kind of quality that was relevant to the problems. I think where we did encounter problems was when we had, somewhere along the line, political appointees.

*Q: Were you aware of any rivalries between different sections of the embassy? That is to say, political versus economic, or commercial versus AID, or CIA with political?*

LAISE: (Pause) I think on the whole it was a fairly harmonious group. Obviously there was debate and different points of view, which I considered healthy, a differing point of view between those who looked at things in purely economic terms and those who looked

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at things in developmental terms. There were valid differences of opinion, but I think it contributed to a healthy exchange. I'm not one who minds, in fact, I encourage unsettling settled opinions. We had several very tough-minded Peace Corps directors who gave a lot of helpful input in the process of questioning AID methodology. I would say essentially there's where the rivalry would be, between the AID bureaucracy and the perception of the Peace Corps about how to [go] on to solving problems.

*Q: Yes, I can see that. There was nothing destructive?*

LAISE: No, no, no, nothing.

*Q: At the time you were there, did you have any women officers?*

LAISE: Yes, a political officer.

*Q: Was she successful in her job? Did you find she was up to snuff?*

LAISE: Well, she wasn't the best we had. She went back and became the Nepal desk officer and got married and left the service.

*Q: If she wasn't the best, it had nothing to do with her being a woman?*

LAISE: Heavens, no.

*Q: Speaking of being a woman, how in the world did you manage to keep your marriage on an even keel when you were in Nepal and your husband was in Vietnam?*

LAISE: Well, I'm not sure. First of all, it was not unusual in the sense that when my husband went to Vietnam, the state of the war in Vietnam was such that women, wives were not allowed there in any case. The military wives, I think, never did go during the period of time my husband was there. They remained in Bangkok or the Philippines. The civilian wives returned, I think, shortly after—well, after '78, I guess. Civilian wives returned

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in some numbers. The president had given my husband a plane, with directions to come to Kathmandu and get a rest every month, and some change, recreation. That didn't work out with the plane that he came every month, but the plane came every month and either took me down or brought him up. I suppose you would have to say that the quality of our time together had to make up for the quantity. Since his task was so demanding, and since so many of his military officers there did not have their wives, and it was a twenty-four-hour job, I think the arrangements that we had was perhaps one of the things that kept it on an even keel. Because we each had our interests and our occupations to pursue, and when we got together, it was when we could give it time.

*Q: Were you able to telephone each other often?*

LAISE: No, our only communication was through ham radio, operated in Nepal by an American Jesuit who founded some of the schools there. I had to make the trip out to the edge of the valley where he had his set every Sunday to make the contact. Ham radio was forbidden as far as sending from Vietnam because of the war, but they did allow one of the embassy ham radio operators to operate one out of the embassy for this purpose only. You know one of our ambassadors [William J. Porter] in Vietnam was a ham radio operator.

The reason that this all started as our avenue of communication, was because Father Moran, the ham radio operator in Nepal, had exchanged messages with Bill Porter in Saigon, so they knew that it was a good connection. Subsequently, I think, ham radios were forbidden from sending out of Vietnam except for this one that operated when Ellsworth spoke to me. But you know, we were speaking to the whole world then, and so, generally, it was just for voice contact, and most of our communications were by letter. But again, that was through unclassified pouch, operating by Thai Airlines that flew up into Kathmandu. They would get it to Bangkok, and Bangkok would get it up to Kathmandu.

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*Q: We were discussing your time in Nepal last week. I wonder if you could tell me how your health was at that time.*

LAISE: Fine.

*Q: You weren't worn down by the exigencies of the job and all of the entertaining and everything?*

LAISE: No, no.

*Q: In general, do you have a high energy level?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Did you find that women were healthier than the men at your post, or didn't it matter, given that salubrious climate?*

LAISE: The climate was salubrious; of course, we had a lot of gastrointestinal disease. I don't think I was aware of any distinction. The effect of the Nepalese diet was very interesting on the Peace Corps, as between women and men. The standard diet was what they call dalbat, it's rice and dal—sort of a dal soup or gravy. It's twice a day because there isn't that much variety in the food in the rural areas. Of course, that's heavy. The rice is starch and dal does have protein. The women gained weight and the men lost weight. That's the only distinction I can think of at the moment as between men and women.

*Q: You don't find that men are stronger in enduring non-stop entertaining than women are?*

LAISE: Well, mind you, in Nepal, there wasn't all that much entertaining that you would have in a major post. I did a great deal of entertaining and I enjoyed doing it very much, largely because the entertaining was related to interesting people who visited from America, and who really were one of the great resources I had in building relationships and better understanding of our country, because while the formal programs of the State



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Department were limited as to what they could send to Nepal, Nepal, because of its appeal to many interesting people, drew people who would ordinarily not be on any programs we had and who constituted a very important segment of American life. Being the facilitator for their meeting appropriate Nepalese was part of the enjoyable part of the task to me, because it was one way of furthering our interests. And I must say, an agreeable way.

*Q: Were there any American wives of businessmen in Nepal?*

LAISE: No, no American business at all.

*Q: You were there such a long time, I thought something might have developed. As far as the wives of the embassy people, you have said that Nepal was a self-selecting post, more or less, so I gather then that the women didn't have problems such as they have in other posts?*

LAISE: I think perhaps it did exist among some of the communicators wives, but that was about it.

*Q: Really, just the communicators? And that was boredom more than anything?*

LAISE: Well, very often they came from a background where coming to Nepal was quite a cultural shock, and they either adjusted, in which case they were very happy, or they didn't adjust, and I can think of several that didn't adjust. But on the whole, the staff, and the women in particular on the staff of the embassy, thoroughly enjoyed Nepal, the secretaries as well as any of the officers. First of all, it's a small enough post that there was a real sense of community among the Americans. Secondly, the Nepali were very open and it was very easy for all these people to relate to the Nepali. And in fact, to demonstrate the character of the mission, when FBO, the Foreign Building Operation, sought to use some of our property to build a sort of compound for the staff of the embassy, there was great resistance among the staff at all levels, to that kind of a move, because they much preferred to live out among the Nepali and have the opportunity to interact and not live

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in an American ghetto. They were quite happy to work with all these people, but they didn't want to be just confined, on the basis of their living arrangements, to an American compound.

*Q: Was it built anyway?*

LAISE: There was a very strong feeling that it would reduce morale to do it that way.

*Q: So that it didn't go through?*

LAISE: So that it did not go through.

*Q: Good, good. What did you do for recreation?*

LAISE: Well, tennis and golf. The small entertainment with either visitors or with people in the embassy who were facing a problem in the development area of Nepal and needed to have an informal gathering—this was rather like a bull session or a seminar really—that was fun to do in the evenings. Also, as I mentioned to you earlier, we did have movies from the military going through, [and] it was a form of entertainment that I could use for a few or many. I did not go in for mass entertainment except when a Peace Corps group would come to town and we'd have a really big affair. But I think the thing to keep in mind is that in a country such as Nepal, the human resources that the United States has constitutes a very important point of contact and catalyst for a country that is so isolated and has such a limited number of trained personnel.

Therefore, people, either visiting Nepal on their own or to the extent that I could persuade people to come up from Saigon, who had a lot of the intellectual capital that some of the young Nepalese managers who'd been technically trained in the United States needed to plug into to get updates and to help them resolve their problems, [were] a very important asset to be drawn upon. It was a bit of challenge, which I enjoyed.

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*Q: You must have felt you were making a very substantial contribution to an emerging nation.*

LAISE: Well, I don't know, but at least we were a reference source on their development problems. I can think, for example, of the economic minister in Saigon, who was extremely able, took a very real interest in some of the very unusual nature of Nepal's economic problems, and was willing to come up on several trips and meet with some of the few very well trained economists who were in Nepal, to brainstorm on how to deal with some of their problems. And so it was always a very great challenge to see whom we could either attract from Saigon and that enormous mission, or people passing through India who often like to have a bit of refreshment in the mountains. We could get them up at very little cost either for cultural purposes of putting on something, if they happened to be entertainers, or for seminars if they happened to be guest lecturers in India.

*Q: Was it you who arranged to have all of these people come?*

LAISE: Well, sometimes I did, because I had the personal contacts, or sometimes it would be the head of the AID mission, or sometimes it would be the head of USIA. We had very good people in those areas when I was there, and it was a very important tool of our diplomacy. They were alert in reaching out and knowing what was going on in the neighboring countries, and reaching out for that resource and bringing it in into Nepal, and sort of programming them, and usually the embassy residence was a natural place to do it. Our embassy, I might say at the time I was there, was pretty deplorable. I think it was at the bottom of the list as far as the quality of embassy in FBO's ranks. So that was not very conducive to interaction, but the residence was.

*Q: What language did you speak at these? Were the upper classes in Nepal English speakers? Did you take language lessons?*

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LAISE: I did take some language lessons, simply to have my ear attuned, but not to be able to speak it. It's one of the hard languages, and I'm not all that good at languages. But yes, English was an adequate way of communication with the officials. It was not adequate at all for traveling in the country, nor was it adequate for talking with the women, the wives of officials. The English competence was limited even where it was spoken, so one had to be extremely careful in presentation to make sure one was understood. And if necessary, there had to be a translator there. We always had Nepali language officers in the mission.

*Q: I know from everything I've heard, both you and your husband have a very strong sense of service, but did you ever get to the point where you just wanted to chuck it, so that you could spend more time with your husband?*

LAISE: I felt that whatever talent I had was better used where I was than in Saigon. While it would have been very nice to be together, I think as long as Ellsworth was in Saigon, it made sense for me to be in Kathmandu. I certainly never got fed up with it. I thoroughly enjoyed Kathmandu; he thoroughly enjoyed coming there. It was probably, under the circumstances that existed in Saigon, the best solution.

*Q: Did you have any trouble with the department with staying on so long? Because that's rather unusual.*

LAISE: No. I think it was unusual, and I've always presumed that the department, although they talked about various other assignments from time to time, were perfectly prepared to leave me there, at least in the area, as long as Ellsworth was in Saigon, because that's the way the President wanted it.

*Q: I see. What was your husband's attitude toward your whole career—one of great pride?*

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LAISE: Very much so, and extremely helpful, yes, and very, very supportive. In fact, he always said that he wanted me to keep on, and he wanted to become a dependent spouse. I found that hard to imagine.

*Q: Pretty high class dependent spouse, wouldn't he be? One question I didn't ask you, and that is about the ruling they had at the time you became an ambassador, that if one were married, one lost the job. Does that not apply to ambassadors? Did it come up at all? You were the first from the career to marry after you became an ambassador.*

LAISE: To be perfectly honest, it did not come up in the department, I presume, because it does not apply to ambassadors. An ambassador is a presidential appointment. But what was necessary was to get the consent of the president as well as [that of] the senior ranks of the department. The only people who knew about it ahead of time were the assistant secretary for NEA, the secretary of state, and the president.

*Q: I see, sort of like a royal marriage being sanctioned by the chief of state. Can you think of any way in which the fact that you were a woman contributed to your great success in this post? I know you were very much beloved by the people in Nepal.*

LAISE: (Pause) It's very hard for me to make that assessment. I think somebody else should make the assessment. I was discussing this question recently with another woman ambassador to another part of the world but to a developing country, and I think we were both prepared to speculate that where the personal qualities are such as to command respect in a country such as this, then a woman, I would venture to believe, perhaps does have some advantages that certain men would not have. It's not true of all men, and it may not even be true of all women, but I don't believe that a woman is as threatening to a male official in this part of the world as perhaps another competitive male would be. In discussing this with the other ambassador, she recorded, as I experienced, a willingness to be candid and confide in rather extraordinary ways, I mean in a rather extraordinary

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degree, and we were trying to figure out what might have led to it, whether it was just a personal chemistry or whether it was something more than that.

I tend to feel, at least in my situation, it was not so much a matter of personal chemistry as it was the fact that the presence of a woman simply was easier somehow for them to cope with.

*Q: Now this woman you were talking to, was she an American?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Continuing along these lines, do you think that women make better ambassadors in certain posts, in certain parts of the world, than men do?*

LAISE: I'm not prepared to say that. I would never conclude that the quality of an ambassador to a particular post really depended on sex. I think it's a matter of competence and personal characteristics, but I do believe that women are more intuitive and the male mind is more perhaps abstract, and where you have a situation where an intuitive understanding of things is an advantage, then a woman perhaps has a certain advantage.

*Q: Could you tell me how you feel about yourself as far as diplomatic, managerial and leadership skills go?. Do you think you excel in one area over another? How would you rate yourself?*

LAISE: (Pause) Well, I enjoy teamwork and building a team. I don't consider that it's necessary for me to be number one, but if the situation turns out that way, then I thoroughly enjoy doing it. My style is fairly open and collegial, rather than hierarchical, and where the situation permits of that, I think it can be successful. I suspect that where you need a kind of leadership that requires the magic of charisma, I don't have that ability to create that type of image because I see myself as one of a team among colleagues.

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*Q: Did you pretty much guide your own State Department career? Or how much was your happening to be in the right place at the right time and how much was State's decision to use you in a certain way?*

LAISE: I think it's fair to say that in the Foreign Service it is expected that an officer will have a hand in shaping his own career interests and helping the department guide his posts, so that's related to his own assessment of himself, and I think I participated in that process. I equally think that I was extremely lucky and, as you say, perhaps in the right place at the right time throughout my career. I got into government because of the defense build-up. It was an expanding time for government employment and a creative time because of all the new problems that had to be solved, and many people were coming in from outside into government positions for whom it was not a career, and who brought enormous talent. So one was exposed to very talented people who would perhaps normally not have been in a government career. A great deal of my training in the early years was with people who had come in from the outside with considerable talent.

And then, of course, women were given the opportunity during the war since they were not subject to the draft, and those who had training in public administration, as I'd had, were a relatively new phenomenon and were given a shot at it.

Then after the war, again, I moved into an area of the State Department that was simply created after the war, the Bureau of the United Nations Affairs, and had to be built from scratch. And this equally was staffed with extremely able people, and it was a very exciting period in American diplomacy, the president's creation of the Marshall Plan, the U.N., NATO, and a lot of the institution building, in an effort to insure that another world war would be avoided. There was great hope, great dynamism. After my seven years in that arena of multilateral diplomacy, I myself felt the necessity of getting more in-depth exposure as permitted by bilateral diplomacy, and felt that with my experience on the international organizations, Asia was a place I needed to have first-hand experience in because so much of our future would be related to it. I knew from my experience in these

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international organizations and associations that I, as a woman, could work effectively and found a great deal of interest in what was going on in India. So I helped the process along.

*Q: Do you feel your presence made a difference on U.S. policy regarding Nepal, and on U.S. relations with Nepal?*

LAISE: Yes, I do. I think it so happened that I was there at a rather important time in a shifting perception of our interests in that area, and a shift in the kind of resources that we devoted to that area. This may sound a little complicated in the telling, but when I first began in the department in the Division of South Asian Affairs, and subsequently went to Nepal as ambassador, our relationship with India was such that we had a genuinely collaborative relationship in relation to Nepal, both in terms of the programs that we undertook there as a complement to what they were undertaking, but also in the financing, because the financing of our AID program in Nepal, as I think I mentioned earlier, was done by the rupees that we owned in India, Indian rupees, that had been accumulated as a result of the sale of PL 480 commodities to India. And India was agreeable to our using those rupees in Nepal, because most of Nepal's business was with India and the trade—in effect our rupee input—helped the balance of trade, as between India and Nepal.

But with the shifting power relationships in the area following our opening to China, which was seen as an enemy, or an adversary of India, and our moving from seeing Communism as a monolithic bloc, India's suspicions of our having interest in Nepal that did not coincide with hers grew. And then after the Indo-Pak War of 1971, this seemed to be more demonstrated as far as the Indians were concerned, not in Nepal, but in the region generally, since we were seen to tilt toward Pakistan by the Indians, and subsequently the Indians signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. This put us in a posture where the Indians saw us more partial to Pakistan and China's interests than to India's.

This made for some degree of difficulty in our relationships in Nepal because the Nepalese were not beyond trying to play upon this, and also because India had the power to deny us



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access to Nepal because our only means of access to Nepal is over Indian territory, either by air or by land. When relations would get somewhat strained between India and Nepal, India, by virtue of hampering trade with Nepal had considerable amount of leverage over Nepal, and indeed a certain amount of leverage over the rest of us who were in Nepal.

At the same time all this was going on, and perhaps because this was going on in the larger picture of the shifting power relationships in the area, it was decided, both in Washington and Delhi, one of the ways to reduce some of the tensions between us and India was to simply do something about our huge rupee balances in India which had the potential, if we chose to do so, of a terrific impact on their economy.

Ambassador Moynihan worked very hard to work out a solution to the disposal of the rupee problem, and indeed did manage both on the Indian end and on the Congressional end to, in effect, write off a lot of the rupees and reduce our rupee holdings to a minimum needed for administrative expenses in India. So that cut off the financing of our AID program to Nepal. It meant then that Nepal had to compete for dollar aid under the dollar programs that we had on a bilateral basis with that part of the world, and also for the multilateral programs which were dollar aid. Dollar economic aid not tied to security assistance generally tended to come in the form of loans and not grants. And this was just a new world altogether for Nepal.

So the combination of trying to shepherd our relationships through these changing perceptions on the part of the Nepalese and the Indians of our interests in the area, and trying to keep a steady hand and assure both the Indians and the Nepalese that our interests were complementary to each of them, and in no ways threatened either of them, was, I think, a place where my background and experience in India and relationships here and influence, you might say, in Washington contributed.

Equally, I think I, with the help, of course, of the mission, helped orchestrate the strategy to get Nepal aware of the constraints that they would be working under in having to

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satisfy and justify our aid on the dollar basis, which is a much more stringent requirement because it requires annual appropriation from the Congress. So I do have a feeling that the role of the ambassador was critical in that, and my role in particular, because Nepal simply had not the ability to get that much attention in Washington.

*Q: Did you have access to President Johnson?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: That's a tremendous plus, isn't it?*

LAISE: Oh, yes. One of the things that was very evident to me was how much difference it makes in the effectiveness of the ambassador if he or she is seen by the country to which you are accredited as having access to the president. It doesn't cost anything, but it enhances your influence enormously.

*Q: Diplomacy boils down to a one-on-one interaction between individuals, doesn't it, in very large part?*

LAISE: No, it's where the individual is seen to have influence where it counts, that's all.

*Q: Is there anything more you want to say about Nepal before we wrap up?*

LAISE: I think we've covered the ground pretty well. I will think about it, and if there's anything I think I've forgotten, I'll come back to it. I would only say that I think it is a sleeper post in our service, because it was not only fun and exotic, but it really was an interesting place to be, [and] because it was one of the few places in the world at that time where Americans were welcome and where there was a friendliness, where there was a real challenge. Nepal formed a case study, I always thought, that challenged us on how to relate our available resources to the development problems of a country such as that, in a way that would serve the interests of both of us. In some ways, I feel that we were

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successful in demonstrating during those years, how a large and a small country can develop a healthy relationship.

*Q: In 1968, you were promoted to the personal rank of career minister. Before, you made a comment that you think you got this so quickly because of the women's movement. Would you like to amplify that remark?*

LAISE: Well, as I testified in court on a class action suit, not very long ago, the record of the Foreign Service in having women anywhere in the Service, and certainly in the higher ranks, was deplorable. My impression is that the women's movement forced the department, and indeed a president who was wanting to get votes, to have more visible appointments of women to high places. I think the department has sought, where it had qualified women, to speed up the process to the extent that the women demonstrated it. I'm not suggesting that they should set the standards aside, but to the extent that a woman can be tested and demonstrated to have talent, they gave the opportunity, and I think the progression was faster than normal.

The upper ranks are still very thin indeed, largely because not very many women came in through the examination process, which is a bottom-up process, during the sixties. The women who had been blanketed in under the Wriston Program were retiring or thinning out or getting discouraged, because many of them did not have the kinds of skills that would necessarily be successful overseas. Therefore, they didn't move as fast as they would have liked.

*Q: In 1973 you received the Career Service Award from the National Civil Service League. What was that for?*

LAISE: Well, the National Civil Service League is an organization that sought to recognize distinction in public service. (Q: Men and women?) Men and women, oh yes. This award was in recognition of distinction.

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*Q: How many are given?*

LAISE: Each year, I don't know that there's any set number, but I think four or five, maybe 6. At that time, the two major Service-wide awards were the National Civil Service League award and then the Rockefeller Public Service awards. The National Civil Service League awards, I think, have sort of fallen by the wayside, and now the President is conferring awards for distinction in civilian service. Of course, the department itself confers awards for distinction or for superior service.

*Q: I know at one time, in the early seventies, there was an award for outstanding women.*

LAISE: The Federal Women's Award, and I received that too.

*Q: Is that still being given?*

LAISE: No, I don't think so. Again, it's really a product of the women's movement because now women are given much more of a shot at the awards in competition with men. And obviously special awards because you're a woman, fall by the wayside.

*Q: When you came back to the United States, you became assistant secretary for public affairs, and you were the first woman to be an assistant secretary. What were your tasks in that assignment?*

LAISE: (Pause) At the time I took over as assistant secretary for public affairs, it had been vacant for a couple years and was filled on an acting basis by the assistant secretary for education and cultural affairs; it was combined. The appointment was made at the recommendation of the then secretary, Secretary Rogers. By the time I took up the appointment in the fall, after I'd had my leave following my assignment in Nepal, the Watergate events were building up. A change was made and Secretary Rogers resigned and Secretary Kissinger came in as secretary of state. All of this presented an opportunity,

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in terms of this particular job, which, because I had very able assistants, we seized and ran with the ball.

Secretary Kissinger, during his public testimony and during his confirmation hearings, indicated his desire to build a dialogue with the American people and enlarge the dialogue of the Department of State with the American people about foreign policy. We took this as a message that we needed to get ready and figure out a way to make that process come about. So that's precisely what we did.

As you might expect, when Secretary Kissinger came into office, he had a lot of things on his mind other than going out into the countryside and trying to build a dialogue, but all of this gave us a chance to try to develop mechanisms by which we could carry out the mandate from the secretary. We took on a quite interesting exercise of inviting the bureau to look at itself, look at what the secretary's objectives were, and from all that they knew to enable us to do a much better job of being in touch with the American groups that were concerned and interested in the foreign policy. Out of this self-examination process that we engaged in, in the bureau, we energized what had been a rather dormant bureau to develop a more effective relationship with important opinion molders throughout the country.

Now, in order to do that, of course, you had to know who those people were, and the State Department, unlike any embassy, at that point was not terribly well informed about the make-up of the important foreign policy interests throughout the country, where the leadership groups were and what the political dynamics were of foreign policy out in the countryside. And what all this required was, in effect, trying to, within very limited resources and with constraints imposed by Congress that we were not to be in the business of propaganda, trying to reach out to the leadership groups in the foreign policy areas throughout the country and build our relationships by the fact that we had material that was of interest to them, the fact that we had conferences here in Washington that were of interest to them and the fact that we had a building full of very

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knowledgeable people who would be willing to speak to them. But the major objective was to turn things around from where we were responsive to an invitation of organizations out in the countryside and their priorities and their agenda which may have had nothing whatsoever to do with what the agenda of the nation was, and to know enough about these groups and to be able to negotiate the kinds of programs that were more in harmony with what the agenda was for the nation, in trying to develop an understanding of foreign policy issues.

We also happened to have in the person of Secretary Kissinger, a star performer. And so, instead of being in a situation where we were trying to field somebody that the Rotary Club or the World Affairs Council in California wasn't a bit interested in hearing, we had somebody who everybody wanted to hear. Therefore, we were recipients of enormous amounts of mail and invitations for him to speak, which were way beyond his capacity to cope with, as you can imagine. Therefore, it fell to us, not only to answer his mail, but also to advise him on what it was important for him to do in terms of his style of building the dialogue, and then how to build networks of organizations at which anything he appeared at could have a ripple effect in the whole region rather than just being a one-night stand where it would be in one ear and out the other.

We eventually developed a model that when he was ready to go on the road he was very happy with, whereby we knew where it was important for him to go and when, and why, and what organizations would be the most appropriate sponsors for his appearances, and to program it around a major speech, a gathering with the leadership in the area, and that meant identifying what the leadership was in the area, not just in one city but in the region, and to have an informal give-and-take, and also to plan a meeting with media people, not the fast-moving press, not the correspondents, but the people who controlled the programming of the media. That became then the pattern which he followed in his trips throughout the country.

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It was a very extraordinary period, because again, it was the period of Watergate, when the country was disillusioned with Washington, and the only person who really had any credibility at all was Henry Kissinger.

*Q: Did he make suggestions too, or did he tell you, "I want to do this and that?" Or did he pretty much follow the program outlined for him? In other words, how much faith did he have in the State Department?*

LAISE: Initially, he had to depend on us because he had not had any experience before, and he was sufficiently pleased with the way in which it was done that we continued the process. And then obviously it was a process he felt comfortable with, and at every occasion, when it came to his making a trip, we would make a full proposal, backed up with memoranda and background material, and then he would make judgments and suggestions to both, perhaps as far as timing is concerned or altering the format of it. I think it would be fair to say that when he started these trips, since he'd had no experience in it, he was of necessity dependent on us for setting it up, and since he was pleased with the results and with the interaction that this made possible between him and the leadership out in the country, he found that it was very effective.

*Q: When you took that position, was that one of many that was offered to you? Were you offered another embassy?*

LAISE: No, again, here was a situation where it was a consultation. It was known that my husband and I had lived apart for six years, and this was a case of trying to find a tandem assignment, and a tandem assignment meant Washington. Both Ellsworth and I were consulted about what we would be interested in, and what seemed to make sense. There were several possibilities that would have been compatible with my career interests and the desire to be in Washington, and I had been approached on them earlier when they became vacant. One was the senior seminar, and one was the representative at the War College, both of which would have harmonized with my personal situation, but by the

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time I came back, those jobs had been filled. And this one seemed to be a possibility in which I was very interested, although I hadn't had a great deal of experience in that area. Nevertheless, in a sense I think it can be properly characterized as sort of an ambassador to the United States. One was engaged in public affairs in the country in which you were accredited, and this was sort of doing public affairs in the United States.

*Q: Is that the position that Marvin Kalb has now?*

LAISE: Not Marvin, Bernard Kalb. I'm not certain; he probably does. The reason I'm not certain is that the nature of the job of assistant secretary of public affairs has changed from time to time. There was a time when it—as it does now, I think, included being the press spokesman for the secretary.

*Q: Like Hodding Carter.*

LAISE: Yes. But prior to my going in, and perhaps that's the reason the job was not filled for a couple of years on a full-time basis, the press spokesman under Secretary Rogers and under Secretary Kissinger was right in his office, and that's the way it was organized in Saigon. There were a number of people in the bureau when I went in who thought that had to be recaptured by the bureau in order to have the bureau in a sufficient position of influence and relationship to the secretary to be effective. All the glamour was in the press job. I think all predecessors who had the press job at the same time they had more of the long-term educational job in public affairs felt that way. The press was the exciting part. It is indeed an exciting part, but it absorbs all their time and energy and managerial talent.

So when I went in, it remained separate. I was quite content that it should remain separate. First of all, I certainly had no experience in handling the press, the fast-moving press. As I got more into the job, it was evident that attention needed to be given to more than just the fast-moving press. What gave us the opening to do it on this basis and still count was the fact that the secretary had announced in his hearings that he wanted to open a dialogue with the American people, and that meant broadening it out beyond just



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communicating through the diplomatic correspondents and the international press here in Washington.

*Q: Well, your next step was director general of the Foreign Service.*

LAISE: I think we should save that for another time.

*Q: Ambassador Laise, would you describe the office of the director general?*

LAISE: (Pause) The office of the director general of the Foreign Service is a somewhat ambiguous title. It grew out of the Foreign Service Act of 1946, and originally the director general was basically to have been in charge of the Foreign Service, quite independent of the line of command in the department.

As I understand it, Dean Acheson felt this was something of an anomaly, and made sure that the director general of the Foreign Service reported to the line of command in the department of state. My understanding is that the concept of the job has shifted over the years, but symbolically it has continued to be important to the Foreign Service as representing the interests of the Foreign Service. Nevertheless, the realities are that the director general is the equivalent of an assistant secretary of personnel. He or she does no longer have that special role of representing the interests of the Foreign Service that the position had initially, because once the bargaining rights of AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] were recognized, it is considered in the Foreign Service, that the representation of the interests of the Foreign Service are held by AFSA. So that, in reality, in my view at least, the responsibility that adheres to the office of the director general of the Foreign Service is no more, no less than the assistant secretary of state for personnel management. Equally, it was understood that the job encompasses being director of all the personnel in the department of state, not just the Foreign Service.

*Q: You were, I believe, Henry Kissinger's choice for that position, is that correct?*

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LAISE: That is correct.

*Q: How large an office is that?*

LAISE: I'm afraid I've long since forgotten the numbers of people involved that one has to supervise.

*Q: All the personnel branches are under that, of course.*

LAISE: All the branches are under it, yes.

*Q: You had that job for approximately three years. What is the most difficult part of that job, matching people to openings?*

LAISE: Well, by definition, personnel management is a reconciliation of contradictions. The individual's interest is in the best job, and the institutional interest is in having the best person for the job. Sometimes those two interests coincide, but more often than not they don't, so one is in the constant position of trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. Part of the challenge in the task is to try to administer a system with justice and fairness to all when managers, bureau managers and chiefs of mission, are basically interested in getting their own way for the people that they think are the best for their jobs. That, too, creates tension and conflict.

*Q: Yes, I can see that it certainly would; constantly soothing feathers, I suppose.*

LAISE: Well, more than that, what we call "honest brokering."

*Q: How automated was the department when you were there? Did you have the use of all this electronic equipment they have now? This was in the mid-seventies.*

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LAISE: Well, I'm sure that they've progressively computerized a lot of the data. I would not be able to say just where it was then as compared to where it is now, but certainly we did have a lot of material on computers.

*Q: This a question my colleague, Jean Wilkowski, wanted me to ask you, and that is, was there any attempt made to try to match the styles, the manners, the personality of people who were to go out as ambassadors to the heads of state of those countries? Or was it enough just to try to find the right person with enough knowledge to go to a particular country?*

LAISE: I think possibly that may have been one of the factors, but not the only one. I think in all cases, we sought to do as thorough and rational a job as possible, that is, we made up job descriptions, job requirements for the various missions, and sought to match talents to all of the requirements of our relationships. Obviously in certain countries, the ability to communicate effectively with the head of state of another country is a vital aspect in that regard and is taken into consideration.

*Q: Is it a high pressure job?*

LAISE: Yes.

*Q: Was it as hectic as the one you had had just prior to that, when you really didn't get much time off at all?*

LAISE: I think the pressures are much greater in the office of the director general because lives are at stake, and careers are at stake, and one is constantly aware of that. It takes its toll, believe me. I got high blood pressure as a consequence.

*Q: I suppose it's the sort of job that's quite thankless.*

LAISE: It is.

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*Q: You can never please everybody.*

LAISE: You never do, no.

*Q: So you gave that three years?*

LAISE: Well, mid-1975 to the end of 1977.

*Q: And then you decided to retire? (LAISE: Yes.) Now what was your thinking, that you just had had enough of serving?*

LAISE: No, no, I think I referred you to the articles that I had written in the newsletter, and in my last article, I think it makes it very clear. At the time that I was in my last year of being director general, we were appealing district court of appeals' decision to the Supreme Court to re-establish a mandatory retirement at sixty. Although as a career minister I had the right to continue until sixty-five, I felt that since I was in effect initiating the change on the Supreme Court, which we won by the way, to re-establish sixty as a mandatory retirement age, I needed to reinforce a belief in the cause that I was espousing.

*Q: I'm sure your husband was delighted to have your full attention too.*

LAISE: That also matched very well with the end of his negotiation of the Panama Canal.

*Q: You didn't have the decompressioning, you wouldn't have needed that, would you, because you phased yourself out. Some ambassadors find that the transition to life in the U.S., after having been chief of mission abroad is a very difficult one, but I don't sense that with you.*

LAISE: Well, no, I had four years back in the United States, four and a half years in a responsible position before I retired. So I was very well plugged in to the national scene. Before we go on to retirement, let's go back to the job of director general. I think it's desirable to indicate what I sought to do, and what it seemed to me that was

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accomplished. When I undertook the task, I created a task force within the personnel division to assess what the perception in the service was of our problems and needs. We put together and we sent to the secretary what I think was a first-class series of proposals for trying to tackle the problems we found. Essentially the problems were systemic, and we all felt that just tinkering with the problems was not going to get us very far. This included not only trying to improve the quality of personnel, and certainly the affirmative action, but a whole range of things needed to be accomplished but could not be accomplished because the essential structure of our system was in such disarray. This came about because in the past we had sought to cram all categories of people into the Foreign Service system, when the system didn't match our needs. We had to make so many exceptions that it was hard to say that we had a system.

The proposals that were put forward as a result of the task force were designed to make a coherent attack on our problems and to set out a course of action which was necessary over the next few years to achieve the desired results. Essentially, it boiled down to the need for a more centralized management strategy, the need to relate our resources to our foreign policy goals, and the need to recruit and advance the talent required to achieve the excellence that was essential in the pursuit of our foreign policy objectives. Therefore, the recommendations tackled the problems of structure, recruitment, promotion, assignment, professional development, and manpower planning and resource allocation. In all of these areas, some advances, I think it can be fairly said, were begun, but certainly we fell short of our goal. One of the still remaining institutions that came out of this recommendation is the priorities policy group, that seeks to relate resources to policy priorities.

The problem of the structure of the service and the relationship of the Foreign Service and the civil service to our needs and, in particular, the importance of providing careers for specialists as opposed to generalists, laid the groundwork for what subsequently was carried out in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, but there was insufficient time in the remaining life of the administration to accomplish it during my tenure.

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*Q: How closely do the result of your study, line up with what was actually passed in 1980?*

LAISE: The actual bill includes many aspects going way beyond the recommendation of our group. The important structural recommendation that was embedded in the Foreign Service Act of 1980 was the fact that we should continue to use all of our authorities to recruit the people we needed, and that the Foreign Service would be a separate entity that involved the requirement for worldwide service and that the Civil Service would be used for the home service. What made it easier to accomplish later rather than at the time we were working on it, where the resistances were very great in the department, was the fact that the Civil Service Reform Act decentralized much of the authority to the department in the civil service realm that the department did not want to yield up under the old system.

Another area that was introduced during my time in the assignment process, was the open assignment system to enable people to participate more fairly in planning their career advancement. Equally, some groundwork was laid for professional development, and certainly we made advancements in improving the manpower information systems. In retrospect, it seems to me that we achieved some momentum, not all that we would wish, but at least I think we laid the groundwork for those who followed. I believe some of these recommendations are still a matter of interest to the people who are wrestling with the same problems.

*Q: How do you feel about the way the open assignment system has worked since the passage of the bill? Do you think it balances the needs of the service with the needs of individuals?*

LAISE: Well, I gather, and this is only by hearsay, that the system has never really worked as it was intended to work when we originally designed it. It has turned out to be more permissive than was ever intended. But I believe that in a system such as the Foreign Service system, there has to be a combination of openness with responsibility for discipline, and the discipline needs to be enforced fairly, and can be, I think, if it's seen

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to be fair. But that's where I think there have been problems, because the operation of the system did not have the same strong leadership for discipline that existed when I was there. There was no question that in the recommendations that we made we had the full support of the secretary, and of Larry Eagleburger, who was the under-secretary for management. In both cases, there was strong support for the notion that a commitment to individuals to give them a shot at the open assignment process had to be matched also by responsibility on their part; on the final brokering of mutual interests, the interests of the service had to prevail.

*Q: How much of a problem has the liberation of women made in these tandem assignments?*

LAISE: I'm sure that it's made it much more difficult. There's no question that trying to assign two people to the same post or the same area can run counter to the best interest of the service or the career development of other people. It simply introduces yet another factor in the balancing of factors that have to take place in the assignment process, and the trade-offs were difficult enough as it was before that, but that only increases the complexity. On the other hand, I think that from what I've seen, that where you do have career couples, they too recognize that there are individual interests in the long run that are better served by handling them as part of a normal process before trying to take into account the necessity or the desirability of being together.

So as I understand it we have one couple now one party of whom is here in Washington, and one of whom is Rome. That pattern is not unusual in our service; it's not unusual in business, and individuals too have to make sacrifices in their career interests and it's up to them to sort out their personal marriage problems as a result. I simply don't think that the service should be paternalistic in this regard.

*Q: Would you give your views on a professional screening body for ambassadors like the one there is for federal judges?*

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LAISE: Well, we are trying to do that now with the American Academy of Diplomacy, and it's a very difficult proposition. I would like to think at some point in time we could develop a system that would help to bring professional judgment to bear on some of these things, and more effectively that it now does but I think we have to face the fact that the profession of federal judges is a known quantity with a defined role and defined requirements and therefore it's more easily recognized who qualifies and who doesn't. Traditionally, ambassadorial appointments have involved a lot of subjectivity, and we still have a long way to go in trying to develop a definition of qualifications that are recognized and against which you can assess personal qualities. But when the role of an ambassador is as personal representative of the president, there are many factors other than professional accomplishment that go into that.

*Q: How do you feel about the effect on the State Department of the part played by the National Security Council? Do you think that has taken away part of state's power, or was that only under Kissinger—or possibly under Brzezinski as well?*

LAISE: I feel the position here has been pretty well articulated from time to time by Dr. Kissinger. If the department is as good as it ought to be, the need for good advice at the White House is so great that the department can assert a role. That is a generalized statement. I would like to say that I think, at the same time, there is a perfectly understandable tension between those who serve the president, where there's a presidential perspective, and those whose responsibility is to advise on serving the U.S. interests as it impacts on affairs. The White House is the only place where the trade-offs between domestic and international factors and decision-making is made, and therefore, persons who have daily access to the president and who have to assist him in exercising the presidential perspective, obviously have an edge. But that is not to say that [if] the secretary of state and the quality of the advice he and the Department of State provide to the president, has the president's confidence, that the department is not able to play its proper role.



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I tend to feel that this argument gets a bit sterile, because it isn't seen in the context of the realities of the way things work. I don't think it's an either-or proposition. However, I must tell you that the ability of the Department of State to [carry out] a performance role, does depend upon having a relationship of confidence between the president and the Secretary of State.

*Q: Turning now to women's issues, I wonder if you could tell me what impact the women's movement made on your career. You have told me before that your becoming an ambassador was certainly an outgrowth of this. But I wondered, in your own view of yourself, do you feel it has been liberating to you?*

LAISE: (Pause) My case, I'm told, is somewhat atypical, because the evolution of my career has been in new areas of diplomacy, and so I was essentially leaning against an open door. Therefore, I've had no particular sense of discrimination, and therefore, I don't have any personal sense of suddenly having greater effectiveness, if you want to put it this way, because of the women's movement. I think there's no question that, as I said earlier, it created an updraft that advanced my career faster than would otherwise have been the case.

*Q: At the very beginning of your career during the war, when women were needed to replace the men who were doing the fighting, it was understood that the men who returned would take back those jobs and the social order would revert to what it had been before. When you started out, did you think, "I can do this only until the men come back," or "I can try to do this, but, of course, women don't do this job?"*

LAISE: No, never.

*Q: You never had any of that feeling?*

LAISE: No.

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*Q: Well, you really did have an atypical career. So in other words, there really wasn't anything for you to be liberated from, was there . . . really?*

LAISE: Well, at least I was unaware of it. Let's put it that way.

*Q: And you never had any difficulties viewing yourself as being the "boss," to use the vernacular, of men?*

LAISE: No.

*Q: It never was a problem.*

LAISE: I think you have to understand my perspective though, which may contribute to this. First of all, I am interested in service, and secondly, in problem-solving. I really wasn't going at this from the standpoint of "my career." I had entered a profession, and in other words, I was in public service. I've always been in public service, and I viewed it from the standpoint of somehow being in service. I mean, after all, during the war one was certainly imbued with that, and it stayed with me because I moved from wartime service to a relief agency, relieving the suffering and dislocation of war, and then into the Foreign Service, where again it was building new institutions to promote peace and reduce the prospect of another war. And so, always my focus has been service and seeking to somehow resolve problems of relationships in conflict to this contribution to peace. It was much less career oriented.

*Q: Yes, I see. At your posts in India and in Nepal, how did sex-connected views impinge on such things as your dress habits, your ability to go where you wanted, your ability to entertain whom you wanted, that sort of thing? Did you feel restricted at all?*

LAISE: (Pause) Well, no, I didn't feel at all restricted, but one does have to be aware of the decorum that's required in traditional societies, just as a matter of course. But the degree of decorum required was not at all contrary to my own particular standards.

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*Q: Did you ever feel there were expectations from your family members for the female of the family to make sacrifices, such as stopping what you were doing to take care of elderly or ill parents or siblings?*

LAISE: Well, as you know, I did keep house for my father and brother after my mother's death, during college which dictated my staying home to go to college, rather than going away to college. But then my father remarried, and that certainly freed me to a large extent, although I think he had hoped that I wouldn't go overseas. Nevertheless, he did not stand in my way of going overseas. Although, perhaps I felt psychological pressures in this regard, a pull, I basically considered that the career interests had to be fairly served.

*Q: Do you consider yourself a feminist?*

LAISE: I don't know what you mean by that.

*Q: How interested are you in the women's movement? Maybe that's a better way to put it.*

LAISE: Let's put it this way, I'm sympathetic, but I've not been an activist in it.

*Q: You weren't connected at all with the group that Mary Olmsted headed at the State Department?*

LAISE: The Women's Action group at the department? No, but when I was in public affairs, my deputy was active in that group and I kept lines out to them. I felt as director general I had to represent all the people and not just one group, but I certainly was sympathetic to their interests, as I also was to the wives of service people, and the movement that began to emerge when I was there, and to which I lent encouragement, that eventually ended in the family liaison group.

*Q: Are you now affiliated with any particular groups?*

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LAISE: No. You mean women's groups?

*Q: Women's groups, yes, or church groups, or League of Women Voters, that sort of thing?*

LAISE: No, I do give financial contributions to the, what is it? the Women's Political Caucus. Anyway, I do give contributions to assist women to get elected to national office. Sorry, it's not the Women's Political Caucus, it's the Women's Campaign Fund.

*Q: Are you connected with the AAUW? [American Association of University Women] (LAISE: No.) NOW? [National Organization of Women] (LAISE: No.) Are you involved in volunteer work, community groups?*

LAISE: Well, I don't know what you would call serving on boards of educational institutions.

*Q: That would certainly qualify.*

LAISE: That's certainly volunteer work, and pro bono work. And perhaps you could say that I am involved in that. Purposely I accepted when it was offered to me to be on the board of a women's college, Mount Holyoke College, because it was a women's college. I felt it was important to support the women's colleges in developing the confidence in women to cope in the world, and Mount Holyoke is one of the foremost leaders of that.

*Q: Yes. What do you think is the future of women in the Foreign Service?*

LAISE: (Laughs) I think it's as great as they choose to make it.

*Q: Very good. Looking back over your career, can you think of anything you wish you had done differently?*

LAISE: I think I've been extremely fortunate, and one doesn't regret such blessings as I've had. I have often thought that if I were to have to start over again, I might choose a

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different educational route, such as Swarthmore, because I wish that I had a stronger background in philosophy and history. I don't have any regrets about the choice of career, but I've often thought that had things not evolved the way they did, I would have also been interested in serving on the Hill. In fact, I did have an internship one summer on the Hill, in the office of a senator from Pennsylvania, during the time that efforts were being made to repeal the Neutrality Act in the thirties, and that was a great education, I must say. I enjoyed that and I would have—I find the legislative work very interesting.

*Q: Very interesting, was that when you were in high school?*

LAISE: Yes. No, it was when I was in college.

*Q: Would you have any advice to give young women who are considering a career in the Foreign Service? How to prepare themselves, perhaps?*

LAISE: From what can I see in my association with Georgetown, for example, it seems to me that the women coming out of the schools such as that are extremely well prepared to enter the career service, so I don't think there's any lack of opportunity to prepare for the Service. I think the problem is the career service seems less attractive to young women today than other career opportunities. I think this is a cause of some concern. I think anybody going into the Service these days has to have not only the ability to think and analyze and communicate effectively, as far as the substance of foreign policy is concerned, but the need and real benefit from experience in other areas, such as relating to the Congress, being able to deal with the press, being able to explain foreign policy to the American public in general. And this is all in addition to accumulating the tools that are necessary to pursue the profession, such as language, such as tools of economics, the tools of science. They're absolutely essential in negotiations these days. So to absolutely have the caliber of excellence that we need, one has to think, I think, in terms of a Renaissance-type person. But this, of course, makes it much more interesting.

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My understanding is that those who have entered the Service don't lack a challenge. Sometimes they lack the time to hone their skills. But I think the opportunities will remain great because the need is very great, and national interest requires it.

*Q: Do you subscribe to the idea of a generalist, a cadre of generalist officers in the Foreign Service?*

LAISE: Well, I subscribe to the notion that we have to have generalists and specialists, both. I think that's the whole point of having a personnel structure that permits us to recruit both and then somewhere along the line provides career development for both categories of people, so that at the top levels we have the kind of talent we need.

*Q: Are there any unusual problems that young women alone face, loneliness when they are at foreign posts—for the first time, at least?*

LAISE: I really don't know. I'm afraid that's an individual matter, and to a certain extent, I expect that also it's a matter of the particular post. I think it's not something that one can generalize.

*Q: What do you consider the most significant achievements in your life?*

LAISE: I'm not sure that's the way I would put the question. If the Greek definition of happiness is to be occupied in something that enables one to exercise one's talents to the fullest, I think it's fair to say that I've been afforded that opportunity and have thoroughly enjoyed it. It has allowed for a great deal of personal growth, and I consider that along the way many have contributed to this process, and I guess I'll let the record speak for itself.

*Q: Fair enough. You're very busy these days, I know. Would you tell us some of the things you're doing these days?*

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LAISE: I guess juggling is the best way to put it. I think the most difficult problem all of us face in retirement, my husband and I included, is the lack of an office and a secretary to help organize one's time, and to sort out important from unimportant things, and to help organize one's priorities, as well as to assist in the conduct of business. When one is working, the decisions are made according to the priorities in one's position, and there don't seem to be so many choices one's facing all the time. But when one is retired, there are demands on many sides for one's time and attention, not least of which is all the constant mail that comes in. It's very difficult to say, "No," and one really does have to come to a point where it's important to establish some internal discipline and enforce it. I can't say I've arrived at that point.

Initially I was advised by a wise counselor to keep myself open to all kinds of approaches, because there are a lot of things going on in the world which I had ignored, and it was important to learn what's going on out there, and to keep the linkages alive while I sorted out my priorities. Now, however, I think it's important to concentrate my efforts and I have a clearer idea of how to do it. Essentially what I'm engaged in is serving on boards or involved in studies relating to either foreign policy or to international education. In addition, I have accepted service on two corporate boards, where there is an international dimension. This has kept me rather busy.

*Q: You also go to your home in Vermont for a change of pace from time to time?*

LAISE: My husband and I set a pattern when we both retired of spending more time in Vermont, that is, the summer and autumn months in Vermont. It doesn't mean that the activities we're involved in are reduced, we have to make trips back and forth, but two of the boards I serve on are in the area, the Mount Holyoke board, the Experiment in International Living board. And certainly a lot of the relationships that one has established over the years can be more effectively nourished by entertaining friends in Vermont, and

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that seems to be a very popular place for people to come and visit. So in a sense, I also run a hotel then in the summer months.

*Q: Do you ever stop long enough to have any thoughts about getting older?*

LAISE: I'm afraid I haven't addressed that question. I've been fortunately blessed with good health and I'm aware of the importance of that. I think that one of the things that my husband and I shared was a tendency not to look back, but always look ahead. The fact that he, at an advanced age, is still in demand for various assignments and various activities, indicates that there is a need for people who enjoyed the privileges of service that we have enjoyed, to bring that to bear on the concerns of people at home and to share our experiences. There's always some new challenge that keeps coming up and just doesn't leave me very much time to think about it.

*Q: Is there any last word you'd like to say as we wind up this interview?*

LAISE: Well, I'm sure there are probably lots of things that I ought to say, and I'll have many second thoughts. If I think of any terrible omission, I'll be in touch with you. (Both chuckle)

*Q: On the behalf of the Schlesinger Library and myself, thank you very much, Ambassador Laise.*

End of interview